



## **NORMANDY JUNE - 1944**

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82nd Airborne Division WW II**



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

Memorial Day in May 1944 was spent quietly, if over 500 paratroopers could be quiet, at the Cottesmore Airdrome in England's Mid-Lands. There was hardly any reason to compel us to recall that which was past history, particularly since we had been ordered to collect our combat gear several days before, and were transported here by the local bus company and our GI trucks from Camp Quorn. We were here to make final preparations for the long anticipated combat jump into the continent of Europe. Yet the past was important to us, for many had tramped through similar battle strategies and we could profit by their failures as well as their successes. I could still remember when this day was called Decoration Day, and Civil War Veterans paraded in Hunting Park area in Philadelphia when my Grandfather took us to that Park via the #52 and York Road trolley #6, from Germantown.

There may have been a special reason for the British buses to assist in our transport problems, but I was not privy to that mystery. We had our own GI 12 ton trucks, but perhaps there weren't enough of them to handle these runs to the airbase, because they helped out every time we made a dry run practice jump with all our combat gear. Loading was quite a hassle. If there were any Germans spies around, they would certainly be confused by all our maneuvering. We would pass through Loughborough and on to the east through Melton-Mowbray then head for Cottesmore. Cottesmore here we come again!

We never really knew whether this would be our last trip for the invasion jump, or just another dry run. We would have to wait for the briefing to determine that information. We made this trip many times before, and each time we had returned even as we had come. Sometimes we made a practice jump, if the English weather permitted. This time we felt it was different as we boarded the busses at our camp in Quorn and chugged our way through the English countryside. Part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force Troop Carrier wing was waiting for us at Cottesmore with the C-47s all prepared to take us on our intended journey. Each trip led to rumors of one type or another, but this time the older vets of Sicily and Italy were saying that this was it! We did not pay much attention to them because we had heard all that Jazz before in the windy currents of swirling rumors around the Camp and airdrome.

We had an MP escort via a motorcycle troop of snappy looking GI's with their official arm bands on their uniforms, and as we arrived at the base they ushered us into the base grounds, right up next to the hangers that would be our homes for the next several days. It was quite a struggle for us to exit from the close quarters of the buses and form up into company formations to march into the hanger assigned to us. Marching was probably not the best description for this maneuver, because we practically dragged ourselves and equipment to our places.

There were cots all over the hanger floor with barely room to walk, which compounded our travel. It appeared that there were about 500 cots. I wondered who they were expecting. In reality, it was the whole third battalion of the 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment. Each company had an area assigned and commanded to organize their gear and await the call to chow. They even had that area ready for us! After chow we had a preliminary briefing about our conduct on the base and general cleanliness rules to be observed while there. Location of latrines, constant calisthenics, area boundaries, and all that important stuff every GI needed to know.

With the morning chow and calisthenics out of the way, we were ready for our first briefing regarding our new mission. We were issued several new pieces of equipment that were not issued on previous sorties. We received new gas masks and K-rations. Following those items we were handed, after an appropriate demonstration, a grenade composed of some new explosive called Composition 'C' which had been manufactured by the British. It was a mass of clay like material about the size of a softball to which one added a wrapping of elastic sock like covering, and then implanted a detonator. It was explained that we would

carry this item in one of our pant leg pockets, and when this wonder unit was properly used against a tank, it would blow a hole in the side of the vehicle imploding on impact scattering metal fragments in the interior of the tank, or it could disable the treads. I heard what sounded like a whoopee in the rear and several of the Sicily veterans who had witnessed tiger tanks in action at Biazza Ridge, expressed some doubts about the value of this new grenade. It appeared to us that we would be vulnerable toting this unit in our pant leg pockets.

The rumors that had persisted since we arrived at the airdrome began to take on a more serious tone when we were issued ammunition for all our weapons. The invasion was imminent. The final touch was the explanation of 9" Hawkins land mines to be used for road blocks by all our units, and these would be issued to all individuals prior to take off. They would be packed in our mussette bags along with our rations, miscellaneous items, and extra clothes. We were reminded to insert the stiff cardboard piece between the case and the detonator to prevent premature explosions during transit to our destination. We would secure the mine in between rations to keep it tight in the musette bag. Jolly, what!



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*May 1944, Camp Quorn, England – 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon – H Company – 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment*

Training exercises were constant to avoid stagnation from our cramped quarters within the confines of the hangers. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, after the usual chow and calisthenics, the hanger was buzzing with activity as groups of troopers toted into our briefing area large models about the size of ping-pong tables, which showed towns, bridges, and terrain of some unidentified land. All the contours were in place along with wooded areas and grassy fields, and in some cases animals. We correctly concluded that this was where we were going to land in the very near future. The briefing began at 9 a.m. sharp. We were called to attention by our officers into Company formations all sounding off for attendance roll call. Instructions were given about the models and who should gather about which model and listen to the explanations of the tasks to be performed in those areas. The whole third Battalion was present and Colonel Ekman introduced the operation "Overlord" in general terms, but not noting at that time where or when, but reviewing the 505<sup>th</sup> Regiments important objectives and responsibilities, and the proposed link up with seaborne forces within a scheduled time frame. He signified the terrain models around him and indicated that

we would receive further indoctrination shortly regarding our company objectives. He then revealed that these were places in Normandy, France that we would be expected to take and hold until the beach forces linked up with our units, which he indicated was approximately 12 hours, or at least that was the intended schedule. He then ordered Company Commanders to take charge of their units to complete their specific parts in the invasion plans. Our earlier indifference began to fade as the situation appeared to be serious.

Within a short time we were ordered to assemble around those tables which indicated the objectives assigned to H. Company, as part of the third battalion. I marveled at the excellent workmanship that had created those units. Our model had a small village at its center with roads leading out in different directions with labels indicating other towns such as Chef du Pont and Montebourg. North, east, south and west directions similar to maps were indicated. It was difficult to absorb everything at one glance and I was fascinated by the details. I saw the rivers and the fields bordered by hedgerows and other vegetation. A Lieutenant from G-2 gave the initial presentation to our group outlining the areas of main concerns, then turned the discussion over to our platoon lieutenant. Lt. Alexander Townsend and he emphasized our responsibility to support the third battalion companies in the capture of Sainte Mere Eglise. We were to hold road blocks around the village to secure it until the beach force reached our lines in about 12 hours. They would probably be units from the Fourth Division which was scheduled to land on the beach opposite us called by code name "Utah". We learned that this peninsula was called Cotentin, and projected out from the main portion of the Normandy area into the English Channel.

Being unfamiliar with the geography of France, we wondered where that was. Never heard of Merderet River, Sainte Marie du Mont, La Fiere, Neuville, Montebourg, Coquerie, Beuzeville au Plain, or Chef du Pont to name a few of the titles thrown at us in the review. Some names! Who's going to remember all that data? I surely hope that all the officers and non-coms were listening. Take the bridges, ford the rivers, take the towns, set up road blocks, take prisoners for enemy position information, and above all hold until the beach forces reach us. I asked where the code name "Utah" came from, but no answer was given.

At last a break came and we had time to mull over all the information we were given. I could hardly tear myself away from the models as I went around to each of them. One of the officers was still standing by one and he showed us the map of the area of Normandy pointing out the areas depicted on the models and I then began to understand better what I heard earlier. We could see the names of all those places. "Oh!", I said "There's Utah Beach, Ravenoville, Fourcarville, Saint Germain de Varreville, and Saint Martin de Varreville just inland from the beaches". It appeared that with quick success they would reach us in a short period of time right through Baudienville, Beuzeville au Plain, Mesieres, Turqueville, or Ecoqueneauville. That last name was a tough one to pronounce. French was a difficult language for me in High School, and with all these odd titles I began to question the french people and their language pronunciations. Well it was soon time for chow, so we headed for the mess area with our standard GI mess kits, after a quick latrine visit.

We finished our meal, dipped our mess kits and utensils in the two 55 gallon drums of boiling water out side the mess tent soaped, cleaned and aired dried the cleaned kits, and headed back to the hanger area. Crap and poker games were already in progress by those who had completed their meals first, since we had some free time before the next briefing. Money was laying all over one army cot that was being used as the crap game table, while another cot was available for poker. Every one who was willing, or had the dough, was involved either directly, or in side betting at the crap games.

The airdrome was a crowded place these days and the games had been in progress as continuously as free time would allow since we arrived at the base hangers. On several occasions air corps personnel sauntered in to be included in the round robin. A quick road to

poverty, I thought to myself. I wanted no part of the actual gambling, but I became a watcher. I supposed that some troopers figured that they had little to lose, because they would not need the money where we were headed. Perhaps they had a premonition of impending disaster for after all, hadn't we been repeatedly told way back in jump school, that few of us would return alive. We had been indoctrinated into the brevity of a paratrooper's life span, and most of us did not believe that meant us.

The crowded conditions of our hanger life, and the endless formations for briefing, mess, calisthenics, and waiting for the uncertain future began to get under our skin. We were getting agitated with each other, and more than one fight had broken out in the hanger and environs. If we could carry this energy of fight to the enemy, wow !

June 4, 1944 arrived, the eve of our departure for Normandy. Just after midnight we would jump. The situation was now made as clear as possible in order to insure our success. All the towns, rivers, streams, railroad bridges, and roads were thoroughly reviewed on the models and maps, with the officers coordinating the information for us as well as for their own recall. There was some mention of possible flooding of certain areas by the krauts, and that some fields were strewn with obstacles that might thwart our efforts. We would board the planes some time after 2000 for take off. All equipment not already issued, would be distributed by 2000 hours and then we would assemble for our trek to the reliable C-47s. Earlier we had been issued some french invasion currency for use if necessary. For what purpose, we couldn't fathom. In addition to our main chute, we carried a reserve chute strapped across our chest, added to this equipment were the following items that I carried: 1 M1 garand rifle - Belt loaded with 30 caliber ammo - 2 bandoliers of extra 30 cal. ammo - 2 fragmentation grenades - 1 smoke grenade - 1 orange smoke signal grenade - 1 20 foot rope - trench knife with brass knuckles - several days of K-Rations - canteen filled - clothing changes - first aid pack - water purification tablets - toilet articles - misc. equipment such as pencils, notebook - mess kit and utensils - and heavy duty belt and suspenders to help support the load. I put my New Testament in my breast pocket close to my heart. It was a gift from my Mother.

I carried my M1 in three pieces in a special pouch designed for that purpose which was set behind my main chute. I was just about ready to start putting my equipment on and head for the planes, when the order came to us to assemble without our gear. THE INVASION WAS POSTPONED FOR TWENTY FOUR HOURS. This announcement was greeted with many groans. Uncertain weather conditions over the channel made it necessary to hold for later developments. This only added to the agitation that already prevailed. It meant another period of waiting which increased the foreboding of the unknown. JUNE 6, 1944 WOULD BE THE ASSAULT DATE!

This postponement provided additional time to review assignments which sharpened our focus on the impending events. Third Battalion Companies which included Headquarters, G, H, and I Companies of the 505 PIR were to take Sainte Mere Eglise which was situated along N-13 the main road running basically north and south through the Cotentin Peninsula. A strategic objective along this highway which ran from Cherbourg east to Bayeux in the area of Normandy through towns such as Valognes, Montebourg then through Sainte Mere Eglise and Carentan and eastward. This vital road, if cut, could deny the Germans control of the western portion of the peninsula, and our beach forces could then succeed in establishing a strong beach-head from which they could support the landings with additional forces and supplies. If the invasion was to be successful, we needed as much area as we could take for all the troops and equipment to make it so.

June 5, 1944, a day to ponder about our immediate future and all the data that was pumped into us for the past several days. Who's going to remember all the right things? I hope I remember the sign and counter-sign and where I secured that cricket sounding device

for the purpose of recognition signals. I hope that I do not get separated from my squad and platoon. We had some light recreation, and rechecking of our gear, the ever present card and dice games, constant treks to the latrines, and early in the evening our chapel service led by Chappie Wood, whose prayer is still part of our life.

ALMIGHTY GOD, OUR HEAVENLY FATHER: WHO ART ABOVE US AND BENEATH US WITHIN AND AROUND US DRIVE FROM THE MINDS OF OUR PARATROOPERS ANY FEAR OF THE SPACE IN WHICH THOU ART EVER PRESENT GIVE THEM THE CONFIDENCE IN THE STRENGTH OF THINE EVERLASTING ARMS, ENDUE THEM WITH CLEAR MINDS AND PURE HEARTS THAT THEY MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE VICTORY WHICH THIS NATION MUST ACHIEVE IN THY NAME AND THROUGH THY WILL. MAKE THEM HARDY SOLDIERS OF OUR COUNTRY AS WELL AS THY SON, OUR SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN

Evening chow was a very quiet time as I recall, with all of us thinking about what lay ahead. We knew the risks. We had been told way back through jump school at Fort Benning that very few of us would survive in combat, or if we did, it would be in an incapacitated status. Our chances of returning were dim, but no one believed that applied to him. We had heard all these stories many times in training, but it was that very training that gave us the proper mental and physical state of readiness. We were at a high pitch. Our physical fitness couldn't have been better. We were in essence, ready! In fact we had spent just enough time at the airport to be in the right frame of mind to take on anybody. Let's get out of here and get on with it!



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Camp Quorn – England*

*Second row : John C. Kluge - William B. Scherer - Archie J. Brandt - Albin E. Palmquist - Joseph T. Stehn*

*First row : John Matesick - Harold L. Eatman - Herbert S. Gallagher*

Well, we did get on with it! After supper we donned our equipment that was to be loaded on our persons. I had already put on my jump suit, which had been impregnated against gas attacks, and I began to place my K-Rations in my left side pants pocket, and the

balance in my musette bag. I put on my shoulder harness with ammo belt, and filled all the pouches with 30 caliber rifle ammo for my M-1 Garand that would be carried in three pieces in a separate pouch behind my main chute. My first aid pack was on my helmet, so I placed atabrine tablets for water purification in a small bag with other toilet articles in the musette bag. I slung two bandoliers of 30 caliber rifle ammo across my chest in opposite directions, like a mexican bandit. The gammon grenade of composition -c, I placed in my right pants pocket. I was quite doubtful about this piece of explosive, and I treated it with due respect, and hoped not to land on that side.

I stowed an orange smoke grenade in my musette bag and some other equipment that I would not need immediately. When the signal came at 2100 hours to assemble I grabbed my chutes and put them on but left the straps open. I would complete the connection at the planes. The sergeants and platoon lieutenants with the squad leaders checked each mans equipment and then we trudged toward the planes. My helmet felt quite heavy with its liner and wool cap plus the camouflage netting. I was glad that I had not placed anything heavier on my helmet than the first aid kit, otherwise I would be lopsided. I was a loaded ammunition dump. Row after row of planes met us as we looked for the one assigned to our group. There must have been hundreds of them all lined up almost touching each other.

We reached our craft and unloaded our chutes for the final adjustment of all our gear. We all had trouble getting our chutes tightened over everything else and the Mae West that we were required to wear got in the way of all the other stuff. I wondered how the hell I was going to get out of my chute and assemble my rifle and other equipment before I was shot by the enemy. Even the heavy duty suspenders seemed to sag under the load. Being right handed I had earlier strapped my trench knife around my right ankle and before I could secure my chutes I had to place the 9" Hawkins mine into my bag which would ride under my emergency chute across. The cardboard between the detonator and outer ring really concerned me. I would be glad to place that on our roadblocks as soon as possible.

I tightened my ammo belt and adjusted my canteen and entrenching tool then secured my gas mask in place. I tied the end of the shovel around my left leg to keep it from flapping in the breeze and started to put on my main chute when Jack Blankenship called me to assist him into his chute and buckle the waist band. Jack was about the tallest trooper in H Company standing about 6'-8" tall and trying to buckle his chute was a real job. He had to bend over slightly so I would have room to work. I finally got it in place and pulled it tight and after I finished his he helped me strap mine tight. I had all my stuff on now with the exception of my helmet which I had laid on the ground nearby. I could not bend over to pick it up. My M-1 rifle container under my emergency chute made that maneuver impossible. Several C-47 crew members were assisting us get our equipment on and one sergeant lifted my helmet and placed it on my head saying, "You'll need this trooper". "Thanks" I said "I can hardly move with all this stuff strapped to me". I believe them when they gave the estimate of weight of a paratrooper when fully loaded for combat to be about 100 pounds additional. Heavy Man ! Some of the troopers were walking around trying to shake the equipment into a more comfortable position. The order to board the planes came as their engines began to rev up. The sound was deafening with all of them humming into one great crescendo. I was concerned about the two grenades attached to my harness lapels. They seemed to be in a vulnerable spot. Perhaps that is why I carried my New Testament in my left pocket over my heart. We would certainly need the power of God with us this night, and the days to follow. Whoever invented those narrow steps to board the planes heard the wrath of thousands of paratroopers that night. What a struggle! as each boarded and took his bucket seat along the fuselage. Battalion Commander Colonel Krause and his aide would lead off our stick of H Company paratroopers.

Most of the troopers on my plane were first platoon H. Company men. I was in the ninth position. Sergeant Buck Knauff, Norman Vance, Francis Gawan, Corporal Robert Coddington, Glen Carpenter, Richard Vargas, and Larry Kilroy were in front of me along with Colonel Krause and his aide and after me in line were, Marshall Ellis, Hans Frey, Leon Vassar, Jack Blankenship, and others that I cannot recall. We had about 21 troopers on board plus the C-47 crew. I do recall being number nine in the stick of paratroopers and how someone had given me a shove from behind to assist my boarding the aircraft.

The C-47 was really vibrating as its motor turned over chugging and coughing as the pilot was endeavoring to get it running smoothly. The crescendo increased as the planes began moving into line for the takeoff. I wondered if they would get off the ground with their heavy loaded cargoes. Trying to talk was useless over the increasing noise. This was the time in the jump process that I became the most nervous, just before the takeoff. I believe that the uncertain sound of the motors contributed to my intensity. Tremendous excitement filled the air, and much more on the way. I was chewing gum with a passion unknown before. The planes were all lined up and stopped at the runway waiting their turn to lift off as the crews checked their instruments. One by one the planes filed onto the runway revving their motors in anticipation of the impending acceleration for takeoff. We could hear the louder roar as each plane following the leader accelerated down the run-way and lifted into the air. Our turn came and the quivering craft gathered momentum along the path right behind the plane in front. Stubbornly it clung to the ground as if uncertain of its role, but finally it reached the proper speed rising slowly over Cottesmore it gently lifted its load as those before it had done. We kissed old England goodbye. We knew we were in for real trouble now, and parting wasn't easy. All the little chickens had assembled into formation at the assigned altitudes and we were on course for Normandy and all those other names we had learned in the past week.

We knew from our indoctrination that we would be approaching the Cotentin Peninsula from the west side, which meant that the planes would be heading back towards the English Channel and England as they disgorged their loads, That's us ! The Colonel who was nearest the door was nudging the one beside him and pointing downward as we flew over the channel. We all turned as best we could to look out the small windows to see what he was so excited about. In the partial darkness below we could make out silhouetted shapes of ships, and there must have been thousands of them all sizes and kinds. If we had any doubts before about the certainty of the invasion, they were dispelled now by what was revealed in the dim light below our flight path. I could not hear what was being said near the doorway, which was open, due to the motor sounds and it was necessary to shout to get the attention of those across the aisle to look at the armada on the channel. The invasion of Normandy would begin, and we the airborne troopers would spearhead the armies. God help me to commit myself to the task ahead and help me to be a good soldier, and save me from all harm.

I was constantly checking my equipment and mentally running through the sequences and procedures that I was to follow as soon as I hit the ground. Other troopers smoked incessantly since the smoking lamp was lit, while others like me were chewing gum with a similar intensity. Some feigned sleep. Most, if not all of us, were hoping to get out of the plane before we were hit by flak, and hopefully there would be no malfunctions of our parachutes. Any talking had to be done by shouting to be heard over the roar of the droning engines of the plane.

We passed the northern portion of the peninsula and made our final turn to the assigned flight path toward our drop zone when we heard the distinct sound of aak aak. Anti aircraft shells were bursting all around the planes and the reality of our situation bore in on us for all we could do was to wait for the green light before we could get out. I hoped that the pilot would keep us on course and that the german gunners would be nervous and blind to



our location. All before this was practice. The roar of the C-47 almost drowned out the sound of the guns below, but as we peered through the small windows and the open doorway we could see that it looked like the Fourth of July outside the plane. I cringed trying to make a smaller target, as I sat in the bucket seat weighted down with all my equipment. The rations, rifle in case, ammunition, grenades, loaded musette bag, and the ever present parachutes tightly strapped front and back. Each time a flak shell burst nearby, I cringed again and again. With all that stuff coming up, some is bound to be effective and the plane rocked and shook with each blast. We were very tightly packed in the plane seats and the weight of our equipment helped us stay in our positions. This plane must be full of holes, I thought, as the pilots fought to control its flight path. Along with the flak, tracers rose by the millions to greet us.

Suddenly the red light flashed, and the command "Stand up and hook up !" was shouted by Colonel Krause who was in the number one position. Almost as one the troopers arose and hooked up to the static line in the center of the plane ceiling. "Check equipment !" came the next command. Over the noise inside and outside the craft we could barely distinguish the replies of "21 OK, 20 OK, 19 OK, 18 OK", and up to me "Nine OK", I yelled and belted Taylor in the rear in case he didn't hear me. The last trooper yelled "OK"! , and the command to close it up and stand in the door came as we neared the drop zone. The green light flashed. "Let's go", yelled the Colonel as he leaped into the dark Norman night. Quickly we followed, and number nine wheeled out the door leaping in perfect jump school form into the flak ridden sky. The day of the Normandy Invasion was now official! No turning back, no siree ! The past is indeed prologue, the present, the reality. The chute tightened in my crotch, as the planes droned over head, and I knew that my chute had opened though I could hardly look up to see it. I had suddenly slowed as the chute fully opened and I floated in space, as I began my more leisurely descent. Leisure is not the best word as tracers whistled by, and I began to hear again as I never heard before. Alert to every sound as I floated earthward, I wondered whether I would be killed, wounded, or what? How, when, and where would I land? Were the Germans below with me in their gun sights? Would I see my buddies from the stick of 21 chutists? Can I get my rifle unpacked quickly and assembled fast enough? I could see a fire in the distance and silhouettes of parachutes passing through the glare of the fire, and I realized that some were nearby. The staccato sound of machine gun fire broke my trance. It was to the left. No, it was to my right as I kept turning in my chute I couldn't tell where it was coming from. Rushing past a twenty foot high hedgerow, I landed with a thud as I tumbled backward hitting the ground and striking my head on the Normandy turf. I had jammed my helmet over my eyes which blinded me momentarily. I couldn't see. I had to remedy that situation in a hurry." Come on, for crying out loud", I muttered. I could hardly move." Get the chute off!", I said under my breath. Struggling with my chute, I unbuckled the strap and yanked out my rifle case quickly unzipping the side, I eagerly pulled out the three pieces of the M-1 rifle and quickly assembled them loading the chamber with one eight round clip.

I rolled over and came to a kneeling position forcing my musette bag, which had hung below my emergency chute in front, up and over my head to my back and snapped it tight under my arms to my shoulder straps. I loosened the balance of the chute off my gear and I was now ready as I listened for any sound of other troopers with their cricket, the signal of friendly troops. What seemed like an eternity only took several minutes, if that.

From my kneeling position, I was ready for the enemy as I peered skyward the planes kept droning above in the flak ridden sky. Occasionally one large flash appeared and I would see a plane silhouetting earthward. "Oh my God", I thought, "There goes a whole plane load of guys". I was rudely brought back to the happenings around me as one by one troopers came down crashing into hedgerows or banging into the ground unceremoniously, cursing as they floated in. As far as I could discern in the darkness, I was situated in what appeared to be a three acre field. To my right was the twenty foot hedgerow I had so recently missed. To

my rear was some kind of road which was some six foot below the field. I could see the shadows of several men as they emerged from the hedgerows about the field heading towards me and then I recalled that I was in the middle of the stick of parachutists and they would gravitate in my direction. This was standard procedure to gather on the middle man. I gave the cricket snap and heard the reply in two clicks. One gave the sign "Flash", and I replied "Thunder", sign and counter sign given as the troops assembled in my area by ones, twos and larger groups. Within a short time our platoon was in tact along with many from other third battalion companies. Many troopers arrived with the much needed equipment from the bundles dropped from each of the aircraft. These supplies were distributed to all to help get them to our objectives where they would be give us the additional firepower that we required. I carried two containers of machine gun ammo in addition to my already heavy load. Along the road below I could see a group of officers talking to a Frenchman who had arrived on the scene and he was pointing out some directions, at least he was waving his arms in several directions. Perhaps no one spoke french.

Captain DeLong gathered H Company platoon officers together to pass along the orders given by Colonel Krause. The battalion numbering over several hundred men plus some troopers who had missed their drop zone would move on Sainte Mere Eglise where the glow in the sky was showing and take the town and defend it. We could hear sounds of machine gun and rifle fire all around, but nothing was from our immediate location. We had secured our area and were waiting orders to move which came after the confrontation with the civilian who had been convinced to join our group by a group of troopers. With the assistance of our new found friend we moved out towards Sainte Mere Eglise with G Company in the lead followed by H and I Company groups. Some groups were missing by the plane load, and we had no idea where they were, but we could not wait for them because time was very important to a successful of the mission.

It was quite difficult to see where we were going in the dark surroundings as we stumbled down the embankment to the roadway and moved down the road in single file. We had trouble staying in line and following the men in front. I assumed we were heading for Sainte Mere and I hoped that the Colonel knew our route. The trees and hedges screened the sihouettes of the men to my front and I was taken by surprise when he suddenly seemed to vanish when I realized that he had turned right off the road into what appeared to be a cattle trail through the hedgerow and about three feet below the surface of the road. I damn near fell flat as I stumbled onto the trail fresh with cow manure. "Where the hell are we going?", I murmured to myself. This path was almost like a tunnel through the brush which was hanging low over our heads as we meandered along, staggering in the soft turf. I heard low muttering from others, but loud noises would give us away to the enemy, who must know we are in the vicinity. Just as suddenly as we had entered this path, we now began to exit onto what looked like a main road where we paused momentarily to reconnoiter, and check locations.

H Company men were ordered to set up road blocks on this road and several others as each platoon was assigned an area to cover while the other two companies moved into town to gain control and form a perimeter defense of the town. The platoon CP was set up somewhere near the inter-section of two roads and my squad held a road block that faced toward a town called Chef du Pont where we deployed our land mines, glad to unload them from our mussette bags, where we had stashed them in England about three hours ago. Three rows of mines were placed in front of our defense line and we hoped they would stop any German tanks that might try to dislodge us. We were assigned positions to the right and left of the road as well as on either side of it in the ditches and some troopers were given the areas in the fields to cover our flanks.

Some troopers were assigned to dig in on each side of the roadblock about 50 feet behind the mines we had deployed across the road. Vance, Ellis, Gawan, and several others

from the first squad of the first platoon were located there and some troopers were assigned to the left flank along the hedgerows facing away from Sainte Mere Eglise. Jones, Coddington, Carpenter, Beckwith, and Gamelcy were among these. Cruise, Vargas and Larry Kilroy were on the right flank above an embankment at the roadside and about 50 feet from the road. Slightly off to their left were men of the second squad commanded by Sergeant Edward White with Nielsen, Cusmano, Horn, Zalenski, and Davis plus others spread out towards the next roadway where they linked with other H. Company squads.

In the pre-dawn darkness Vargas, Kilroy and Cruise started their foxhole with one of us watching while two dug, and then we exchanged diggers until completed. We were located in front of a three foot high hedgerow that ran perpendicular to the road and we positioned ourselves so that we could cover effectively the field to our front. The hedgerow would provide some cover when we communicated with those on the road. In scanning the area I realized that we were very close to the hidden trail we had taken to arrive in our present spot. I had gotten used to the darkness, and though it was cloudy we could see shapes and outlines of things near us, but the high bank near the road obscured the men there.

We were certainly surprised and not quite prepared for what was about to occur in our area in the predawn darkness. After the planes that had dropped the paratroopers had cleared the sky lanes for several hours, the second wave of C-47s arrived overhead towing glider borne troops with artillery pieces. We would really need those artillery units for our defense of the newly liberated Sainte Mere Eglise.

The first town liberated by Allied forces on D-Day we would learn later. About an hour after we had secured our position off the road block, we heard the unmistakable drone of the planes. These C-47s would be try to release their loads near our objective assuming we had control over the drop zones. Once again as if on cue, the anti-aircraft guns began to chatter as the planes came directly over our area. We knew that gliders were being released and would be descending nearby. The sounds of the planes receded and we could hear the crashing sounds gliders slamming into trees and other obstacles such as farm buildings, which could not be seen clearly by their pilots. One of those gliders had landed about 300 yards from our roadblock. We could hear the noise as they were getting out and removing equipment. Over their shouting we heard the noise of a jeep motor starting and several troopers left the confines of our position to help. Before they reached the landing spot a jeep rushed down the road passing them even as they shouted a warning about our mines ahead. The occupants of the jeep were in a big hurry as we at the roadblock heard their running motor coming in our direction. Above all the noise, the distinct yells at the block of "hit the ground", were heard clearly and we all buried ourselves in the dirt of our foxholes. The driver must have thought our men were Germans and was not about to stop. Down the road they rode on full throttle. KAPOW ! BLOOEY ! BANG ! BOOM ! a deafening crescendo of explosives sounds as a number of our mines blew the jeep and its troopers into the air. All Hell broke loose flashing lights with pieces of jeep and mine fragments raining down around us. Directly across the middle of our mine field they drove and immediately their direction became vertical, and in an arching skyward path they landed in the hedgerow beyond. We could hear the thump and bangs of falling parts all around us. The men had left the jeep on first impact and they had become the first casualties in our area, but they would not be the last. We had lost about half of our mines, which we had so carefully delivered, and they would be sorely needed in case the krauts should attack. Those GI's sure wrecked the hell out of our defenses. The troopers at the road surveyed the damage when all the raining of pieces had ceased and they ventured forth from their protective positions. They had to be careful lest another mine expode amid the smoldering scene. We would have to locate some more mines to fill in the voids and reinforce our tank defenses. Those of us nearby also came over to see the damage, and the smoking remains of the jeep was lying in the ditch at

roadside. My first experience with sudden death as the men were extracted from their perch and quickly moved by several medics to the rear areas.



Photo Courtesy : John B. Wands V.

*John B. VANDS, Jr – KIA 14 June 1944*

All around our sector we could here the chatter of machine guns and rifle fire in the darkness, but after our mine field disaster things became rather quiet through the early morning hours. The infantry forces were due to hit the beaches at 0630 hours and we could be expected to hear the barrage that would precede their landings at Utah Beach. The rumbling began around 6 a.m. and it sounded like distant thunder which vibrated the ground even in our area some 6 or 7 miles inland. The cannonading was softening up the shore defenses and the landing crafts would be starting towards the shoreline. We inland were holding off the Germans from getting to those forces, that is, those of us who had reached our objectives and were defending them. I wondered if all those ships we saw during the night flight were firing because the sound was continuous as they pounded the land forces. We didn't know from our positions how other paratrooper units were faring in their battles nor could we account for all our company men. Whole plane loads had not yet assembled in their assigned area we had learned, but we figured when daylight came we would see many of them. We began to

receive some artillery fire in our area and we concluded that some of the large caliber shells landing in our area were from the invasion fleet miscalculation of the shore location.

Several hours later when the firing had ceased, a french farmer approached our road block from the direction of Chef du Pont and tried to communicate to us that a German soldier was holed up in his house and wanted to surrender. He had been hiding there since he had become separated from his unit during the night. This information was gathered by one of our troopers who was of french descent, and spoke the language. He had been called from his position to interpret. Private Kilroy and Les Cruise, two Philly lads were ordered to go with the Frenchmen, check out his story, and bring back the kraut with his "hans en haut", or something that sounded like that. The Sergeant didn't want anyone shooting him prematurely, or us by accident.

We cautiously started up the road with the Frenchmen in the lead while we trailed behind on opposite sides of the road, keeping a respectful distance from the native and watching all sides to avoid an ambush. About a kilometer or two from our roadblock at Sainte Mere Eglise we arrived at his farm cottage which was set back from the road way several hundred feet. Warily we checked the road ahead and surveyed the land around the house. We had some protection from the house direction because the road had an embankment about five feet high which bordered his field on that side. His home was white with a dark thatched roof. He was standing in the middle of the road as though no one else was about, and we had flattened ourselves against his bank keeping a low profile. We motioned for him to move to his house and tell the kraut to come out to American Paratroopers over by the road. We were very uncertain of this situation and quite suspicious, constantly looking around for any of the enemy. At our bidding, he apparently understood and proceeded

towards his house, and entered the doorway. We waited impatiently for something to happen, but several minutes passed without any indication from within. We discussed the situation, and decided to approach the house one at a time while the other covered from the road. We were all set to make our move when the Frenchman stood in his doorway and motioned for us to come to the house. Apparently the German soldier wasn't anymore sure of his predicament than we were of ours. I told Kilroy to cover me and watch also his rear area and I would go up to the house and rout out the enemy soldier. I wished I had eyes all around to be sure of my safety, but I proceeded anyway reasoning that I was covered by Kilroy. I arrived quickly at the door of the house meeting the owner there. He was jabbering too fast for me to understand with my limited high school French, but I stepped around him into the room of the home with its masonry floor and walls and wood beams, and there standing without weapons was a young German soldier in the green uniform of the Wehrmacht. The dreaded enemy! I confronted him with my rifle and attached bayonet and motioned for him to move out the door in front of me. As he passed by me I thought that he must be about my age. He certainly didn't appear to be more than twenty. I followed out the door, thanking the French people at the home for their help with *Merci! Merci!*, but not taking my eyes off the enemy, who had stopped in front of the house uncertain of my intent. In front of him now, I motioned to him to move towards Kilroy and said in my best German, "*Kommen sie here mit hans en haut*", or at least that is what I thought it was supposed to sound like. He wasn't moving fast enough, so I prodded him against his butt with my bayonet and loudly ordered him to move more quickly.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Richard A. VARGAS – KIA 7 June 1944*

all those comments", I thought. "Gotta keep proving your self all the time", I mused. Kilroy remained at the defensive position while I was directed by the Sergeant to take the man to our compound near the Town Hall in Sainte Mere. I continued on my way back into town where I hadn't been before. Past the Company first aid station and along the main road into Town I cautiously moved my souvenir as I passed other troopers going about their assignments. Those in town, curious as I passed. I came to the stone walled compound and

Impatiently I moved him forward with my rifle hips high, bayonet gleaming in the morning light and urging him onward towards Kilroy at the road, all the while with the "*Hans en haut and komens sie here*". I prodded him with my bayonet, gently of course. He got the point! I had checked him at the house for any weapons, so I wasn't afraid, just wary. I continued to point the way with the bayonet. At the road we joined with Kilroy, waved to the Frenchman, and started down to Sainte Mere Eglise from whence we had come. We motioned to our prisoner the direction to go as Kilroy followed watching sides and rear for any of the enemy. We neared the roadblock and Larry moved ahead to warn our troopers not to shoot Cruise or the German prisoner. That thought might have occurred to some.

The men at the roadblock cheered and jeered as I moved the German through the mine field we had reestablished earlier. "Hey, where did you find that Kraut ?" "Why didn't you shoot him ?" I knew some of their diatribe was directed at the new man in the outfit, or at least since March when I had arrived in Camp I was new to them. "Bunch of smart jerks with

turned my trophy over to those in charge of captives with their thanks for another helper. They had put some other prisoners to work caring for our wounded and theirs. I had my first look at the devastation in the town from our troopers who had battled there several hours earlier, and thought that it might get worse when the krauts recover from their initial surprise. Shortly I arrived back at the roadblock and returned to my position with Kilroy and Vargas, and opened a K-Ration box for my lunch.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Sainte Mere Eglise, looking North on the RN13, a Sturmgeschutz destroyed by John Atchley on 7 June 1944*

The Germans had regrouped from their earlier surprise in the predawn darkness with all the confusion and chaos that our arrival had precipitated, and they now began to probe our defense perimeter that was enabling us to control Sainte Mere Eglise. We had roadblocks set up on all the roads leading out of Sainte Mere and in the adjacent fields troopers from the third battalion were covering their flanks from foxholes dug during the night and early morning. We were receiving artillery blasts of mortars and eighty eights and it was very difficult to determine where the stuff was coming from. We hugged the bottom of our foxholes and wished they had been deeper. The different sides of our perimeter were being attacked by squads of krauts, but our particular road was only under artillery fire. On one road block Atchley and another trooper had manned a 57mm piece and blasted a German attack hitting two armored vehicles and scattering the occupants and troops following.

Vargas, Kilroy and I were busy watching our front between ducking for cover and popping up again when the sounds of artillery abated and suddenly a runner appeared ordering us to move to the left flank, because several of our men had been wounded and killed during that barrage, and the gap left needed to be filled. We were selected to fill it. We would have to cross an open area between us and the roadblock some fifty yards long. The messenger had crawled over this area, and probably was not seen by the enemy. Anyone standing would be visible in that open space. Except for the small hedgerow, we would have no cover until we reached the road. We gathered our equipment that was within reach beside our hole and strapped it all on replacing my hand grenades back on my lapels and restrapping my musette bag on my back. Vargas and I were ready about the same time, so we grabbed our rifles and started to traverse the open space quickly. Kilroy had to gather his BAR ammo and took longer to get going. Vargas and I reached the road safely and climbed

over a barbed wire cattle fence at the top of the embankment and slid down about eight feet to the road gutter. We had held the barbed wire for each other to pass through, but Larry had no one to assist him and got himself tangled in the wire. While he struggled with the wire, we started to cross the road when Kilroy yelled even as we heard the artillery shells coming in. "Hit the dirt", he yelled, and with no further urging we dove for the wooden open gate in the hedgerow on the other side of the road as the shells exploded all around us, and buried ourselves into the Norman soil.

Kilroy had freed himself from the barbed wire even as he yelled, and had dropped to the gutter and flattened himself. Vargas and I had flung ourselves to the ground belly first, rifle and arms out front. We landed on the dirt as the shells hit all around us. The din was almost unbearable as winced with each detonation. We were being covered with dirt and debris as the air was filled with flying fragments. We hugged the ground body to body when through the racket I heard the distinct sound of whimpering next to me. Vargas had been hit by an exploding shell! He was crying and in great pain! Amid the noise I rose on elbows and peered at his body to see where he had been struck. Right pant leg already red with blood. Had to move him to cover, I knew instinctively. "Can you move", I shouted. He could only shake his head, no. I was quickly on my knees, then up on my feet as I grabbed his shoulders and dragged him behind the hedgerow for protection, I turned him on his back, face up. A mortar shell had exploded right next to him and his whole right side from thigh to ankle was covered with blood. His jump pants were shredded in the same area with dust mingling with blood. I quickly knelt over him and loosened his belt to use as a tourniquet. I grabbed my trench knife from my left ankle and sliced his trousers down his leg and almost fainted at the sight of multiple punctures all along his leg. I suppressed a gasp at the sight and muttered to myself, "Tourniquet! Tourniquet!", "I've got to get one on !" Quickly I applied his belt around his upper thigh and tightened it. As I was struggling with the tourniquet, Kilroy crawled around the gate opening. Seeing him I hollered above the explosives sounds for him to get a medic right away! Roddy, or anybody else. I would stay with Vargas and try to hold him together until he returned with help. In a crouching run, Larry headed through an adjacent hedgerow toward Sainte Mere Eglise and I continued to comfort Vargas where I could, wincing with each shell blast still falling, but farther away.

While I waited, I gave Vargas a shot of morphine in his arm from his first aid kit and later would use mine. He was moaning and crying because even the morphine was insufficient for the pain from his shattered limb, and I had my doubts about the effectiveness of the antidote. I was fearful, that if Roddy or some other medic did not arrive soon, Vargas would be lost. How inadequate to the need I was! Why wasn't I a doctor? I tried to cover his wounds with some of the bandages from the aid kits after I applied some sulfa powder along the cuts. I exhausted both kits. I kept checking the tourniquet for tightness. He must have realized the hopelessness of his situation and he appeared to be lapsing into shock as he grabbed my arm and softly said, "Pray for me". I was shaking with my own trauma of striving with an unfamiliar task, and the Lord's Prayer did not come easily to my lips. I almost choked over the words, as I repeated them to him. I recalled his nightly rosary sessions beside his cot in our tent at Quorn and I knew that as a Catholic of Mexican descent, he believed in God. His visual expression confirmed it. I kept reassuring him that help was on the way and he would be okay, and finally Kilroy arrived with a medic. I outlined to him what I had done and he took over the care of Vargas.

Larry said to me that we were ordered by the lieutenant to move to our new location right away. Reluctantly, I departed with Kilroy realizing that the medic was more proficient than I, and he appeared to know what he was doing. I begged the medic to see that he got to the aid station.

Somehow the remainder of that day seemed uneventful, and I was operating in a mechanical fashion not really aware of what was happening. I took off my musette bag to get

some K-Rations to chew on as I sat in my new hole, and much to my surprise, I saw that the bag was full of little holes. It was mute testimony to the nearness of danger to my own body that I had escaped and as I checked it over and cleaned it out, I recovered a number of small pieces of jagged metal from its contents. I was thankful that I had not been wounded in that deluge of shells. When I completed my chow time, I thought that I should get to the aid station and check out Vargas. I informed my squad sergeant that I wanted to see how he was, and since things had quieted down somewhat, he concurred. I headed back into Sainte Mere rifle and ammo belts in place, to locate the aid station, and found it after some direction from another trooper nearby. At the station I enquired about the condition of Vargas, and was quietly informed that Vargas died before he reached the aid station. He had lost too much blood and the shock was too great for his body to sustain life. I was in a state of angry shock myself after hearing that news. I had really tried my best to save him. I felt that if we had gotten the medic fast enough he would be saved. I could not find out what happened after we had departed to our new positions. No one could clearly answer my inquiries. I knew that they had their hands full with many others. I turned and left the aid station and proceeded to cross the street where I sat down against a stone wall and cried. There was nothing else I could do for Vargas. My efforts had been in vain. His shattered body could not cope with the trauma he endured. A short time ago my friend was alive, breathing, talking, and eating with me, then mortally wounded, now dead. A lifetime gone in a few moments! I would remember this day for the remainder of my life, and these hours of June 7, 1944 would not fade or pass from my memory. A short time later I was back at the roadblock, but how I got there I do not recall.

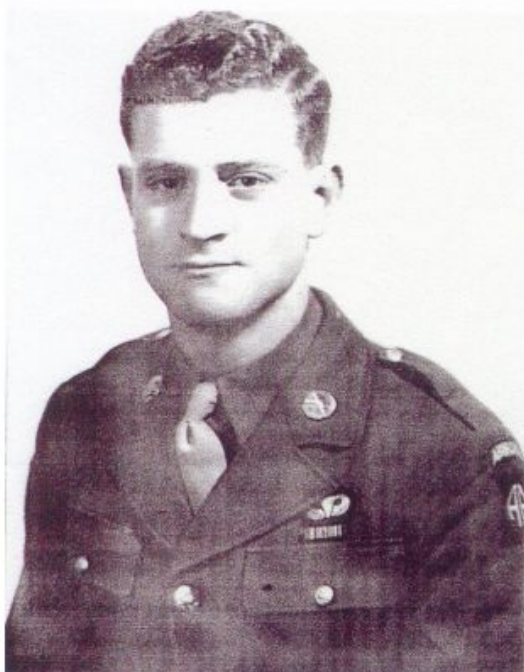


Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Glenn J. CARPENTER – KIA 7 June 1944*

shells zinged across the hole and landing beyond yards away. I never heard anything like this before, Ft. Benning infiltration course and maneuvers notwithstanding. I was literally petrified by the noise and danger. No false bravado, I was scared. Who wants to be blown apart by one of these shells? I remembered Vargas, and I had no desire to be incapacitated. This dangerous crescendo carried an ominous sign of the possibility that the beach force may not arrive, or break through as planned. I was unnerved by that thought and my earlier experiences with human pain.

The road to Chef du Pont was protected by our roadblock, and though we did not see any krauts we could feel the sting of their attacks. Their artillery was aiming at our position and bouncing 88 shells off the road at our spot. We could hear the the guns fire, ricocheting off the road, and land with explosive force in the fields beyond us at almost the same time. The rifle velocity of the 88s created a deafening tumult of sounds. We could hardly hear, much less think. It was like some great continuous earthquake, with debris flying in all directions and the earth vibrating with each crashing explosion. I had been moved to the roadblock position to help defend that area in case the Germans would attack there as they were in other areas of our perimeter defense around Sainte Mere Eglise. I had dug a long narrow foxhole in the gutter at roadside about 30 inches deep, which was as deep as I could go because of rocks in the gutter which caused my entrenching tool to rebound with each ringing stroke I made. I was burrowing myself as deep as I could hugging the bottom as the



We were continually pounded by German artillery and frontal assaults all around our Sainte Mere Eglise perimeter during June 6th and June 7th and late in the afternoon of the 7th one of our troopers at the road block was wounded by shell fragments, and I was ordered to get a medic, because the man was not able to be moved. I headed down the road towards the town center and was passing a six foot high stone wall bordering a roadside property when a terrific explosion rocked the opposite side of the wall sending me sprawling amid the debris from the blast at the wall. I had heard the whine of the shell and was on my way down as it hit the side of the wall. I beat the stones to the ground by a half second. I lay there stunned by the impact of sound and debris on my body. Who could see me from enemy positions? I thought that I was pretty well concealed from easy view. Why are they trying to kill me with all that artillery? Do they have a spotter somewhere? They have been here for years so they do know the terrain very well, certainly far better than we did. I rallied my senses when I saw a soldier about a hundred yards down the road near the aid station, and I shouted to him to get a medic, but he headed for me thinking I was hit, I waved him off as I arose dusting myself off, and shouted that I was OK, but we needed help for another trooper. I continued to move towards him and the station to be sure some one would come. Once there I relayed the information, and a medic and I hurried back to the roadblock to do what needed to be done. Satisfied that my job was done, I returned to my side of the block and sat on the ground with my legs dangling in my foxhole ready to jump in if necessary. My buddies then informed me of Glen Carpenter's fate. During the recent barrage that I thought was all for me, a mortar shell had landed directly in his foxhole. I was again anguished by that news and was glad that I was not a witness to such destruction.

Kilroy, Ellis, and several others at the roadblock were conversing across the macadam road from their respective foxholes about the days events when a second squad trooper appeared from the hedgerow and announced that Sergeant Ed White had been killed and was laying beside the small stream on the others side of the hedgerow from us. It had happened during the same barrage that got Carpenter and sent me flying. Several of us wended our way through the hedges to where the Sergeant lay. There in the thick growth beside a small brook, not far from the stone wall that had protected me, lay Sergeant Jame Edward White, eyes wide open starring at the sky from whence he had come, killed by concussion from the shell burst that covered me with debris. I stood still for a few moments and looked at the ashen face as light as his blond hair. Not a mark of wound or blood on him, yet there was no life in the body. Another good soldier gone!

The original plan which had allowed 12 hours until the beach forces reached us it now expanded into almost 48 hours as June 8th dawned. What had happened on the beaches? Where were the relief troops that were due late Tuesday? Rumors on late Wednesday indicated that some troopers had contacted patrols of one of the regiments of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, and they would be joining us soon. It could not be too soon for us because we were running low in ammunition, and many had been killed or wounded and our ranks were thinned. We were all suffering exhaustion from lack of rest and we needed a morale boost. The early morning Thursday was rather quiet compared the two days earlier, and we began to wonder what happened to the krauts.

Sometime after eleven a.m. we were surprised by the rumbling sounds of tanks to the front of our roadblock and several troopers ventured up the road to take a look from cover, and to our ecstatic surprise, these were from our own 4<sup>th</sup> Division spearheads at last joining up with our unit from the beaches. We broke out with cheers. Some of the troopers climbed up on the tanks to shake their crews hands, and for a ride into town. Our relief had arrived. We recovered from our initial joy and began to give them hell for taking so long. "What took you guys so long ?", we queried. "Where have you been?" "Did you stop somewhere for gas?" It was all good natured and a release of tension for us. We were really more than glad to see

them. It provided a few moments of respite from all the prior pressure of the past several days. It was a time to rejoice in our mutual success.

Several of us troopers cleared the land mines from the roadway so the armor vehicles could make their way into town. The link up was now official and we knew that the beach landings had been successful though not without trials. The Normandy Peninsula of Cotentin was being liberated bit by bit and supplies and reinforcements would be pouring in for the continuation of the battle. Our reunion did not last very long for about two hours later, Sgt. Blubaugh appointed four selected 'H' Company volunteers to join up with like members of 'G' Company with one Lieutenant to be a reconnoitering patrol to scout out our front and bring in stragglers and other lost troopers. Corporal Jones along with Privates Cruise, Wands, DePalma, and Vance stepped forward as ordered. The Sergeant indicated that we were to report back to him as soon as the mission was completed. He said, "I don't know where we will be, but find us." I believe that the Lieutenant in command of the patrol, was Lt. Gensemer.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Kids in Normandy*

We moved out from Sainte Mere Eglise with the Lieutenant in charge and patrolled to the northwest and westward directions from the town covering a great deal of territory. We encountered small groups of troopers from the 507 and 508 Parachute Infantry Regiments holding a bridge, or crossroad. Many spent parachutes in the area and dead cattle and several parachutes hanging from trees with their harness dangling empty the occupant long gone, where we did not know. Crashed gliders with much equipment scattered about them unable to be used by the occupants, who were either killed, or in too much of a hurry to gather everything. The countryside was covered with the debris of war. I could not bear to see the AA covered with dirt and blood. Our hearts and minds burned with hatred at these encounters. Though death was all around, I was not willing to concede to it. We were beginning to accumulate much dirt ourselves from climbing, crawling, and trudging through the hedgerow country looking for either friend or foe.

We assured those that we met, that the landings on the beaches had been successful, and that support was on the way. We could see why the Germans were having so much trouble massing their forces. With so much diversion, they had their hands full with airborne troops all over the area. I do not recall whether we met any of our own regiments stragglers, or lost men, but we met others from attached regiments.

Our patrol was not without a bit of humor. It was necessary to ford several streams along our route through hedgerow country and keeping dry was paramount. In one particular area we reached a stream that was just a little too wide and turbulent to jump across even for our best athletes and the lieutenant had two men get a nearby tree limb of sufficient girth that we could use to walk across the barrier. They returned with the news that there was a limb across downstream a short distance away, so off we trudded to that location. The log appeared to be about 6" to 8" in diameter which would seem ok to travel across the water. No sweat! Our intrepid lieutenant led the crossing with one long step on the log and cleanly

leaping to dry ground beyond showing us how it could be done. I was bringing up the rear and watched as each trooper one by one agily cleared the stream. "Duck Soup", I thought as my turn came. Someone must have greased the wooden pole, because my first step sent me reeling off the log and into the water to my waist. Rifle dirtied, ammo wet, soaked uniform, and wounded pride; but the first laugh that we had since early a.m. on June 6, 1944. They all helped me out of the water laughing as they hustled me up to the bank. We made a brief pause for me to quickly clean my rifle, which had gotten wet and muddy in the flip. I would have to dry off as we traveled. Fortunately my jump suit had been impregnated before leaving England's Camp Quorn causing the water to run off quickly. I was hoping that we would not run into any krauts, thinking that my rifle might get jammed from the exposure in the water.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Private Gilbert L. GAMELCY*

our Companies in the morning. I cleaned my rifle for the second time that day. This wasn't my last patrol, but it was the most humorous. That ended the first three days in Normandy for me.

Morning came early, and our patrol Lieutenant met with us and ordered us to return to our respective Companies noting their approximate present location. The H Company group found their Company located in a cow pasture about a mile away where we reported to our CP, and the First Sargeant pointed out the location of our platoon. Sargeants Blubaugh and Buck Knauf had a good laugh when I related to them how I became so dirty swimming in the stream. My squad buddies also enjoyed the news and Kilroy hollered that, " Jean should see you now ". He constantly kidded me about that girl whose picture I showed him at Camp in England. I learned that we had lost several more troopers in the Company while I was on patrol, in the areas on the way to le Ham in an attack northwards to secure the way to Montebourg. We were in this position for several days and each evening at darkness German planes would fly over and drop anti-personnel bombs on our positions. They were called « Bed Check Charlie ». I believe that Sgt. Buck Knauff was hit by shrapnel in his rear

end on one of those nightly raids while diving for his foxhole. Fortunately it was only a flesh wound.

The next day the Company was ordered to move out in a northerly direction up the Montebourg road to a village named le Ham near Grainville in an effort to expand the beachhead by pushing the Germans further from their occupied positions in France and giving our forces more room for all the troops coming ashore at Utah Beach to consolidate our hold in Normandy. There was much congestion in the rear areas from all the troops and equipment that was now pouring in from the transports. We even attacked at night, when it was difficult to see who you were aiming at, or where they were. We just blasted away in the general direction where the enemy was last seen. During each forward move we were careful to watch for the areas labeled « Achtung Minen », which we discreetly detoured around in each advance. We thought that it was generous of the Krauts to leave these areas marked with signs. In their haste they must have neglected to dismantle, or at least turn them around to distract us. When we had negotiated these spots we set up a defense line along a hedgerow with several of us in the middle of the growth of bushes and trees. From this vantage point we had a good view of the large field to our front. We remained in this position that night, and on the 13th of June we were relieved by another unit and moved back toward Ste Mere Eglise for a brief rest and re-supply of rations and ammo.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Richard J. SMITH – KIA 22 June 1944*

While we were in this reserve position several quite young girls ventured in to our bivouac area to satisfy their curiosity about these American soldiers resting in their farm lands. Our forefathers of World War One years sang about the « Madmoiselle from Armentieres who hadn't been kissed in Forty Years ». We wanted to meet those Madmoiselles, and in the fields of Normandy we met their charming children. We shared some of our rock hard « D » bars with them, and hoped that they would not break their teeth on them.

On the 14th of June we were ordered to move forward towards Pont L' Abbe and St Sauveur le Vicomte. We came under mortar and artillery fire as we penetrated the German lines forcing them to retire to safer havens. We moved cautiously through the hedgerows and fields in single file keeping a good distance between troopers. I was lugging a container of machine gun ammo just behind Vance and ahead of Ellis. As we passed through the desolated village of Pont L'Abbe several people stood in front of their wrecked houses and waved white hankchiefs to us

as a note of thanks for our liberation of their town. I was dismayed at the damaged that had occurred in order for that to happen. It appeared that there were very few buildings left standing without damage. It was a very sad welcoming and I had moist eyes agonizing with them as we plodded along the route. When we moved into open country we travelled across fields and through hedgerows when all of a sudden a loud explosion to my rear had us all flat on the turf not knowing what we were running into. The second platoon had a casualty. John Brooks Wands was killed by what we believed was a land mine planted in the field we passed through. Shorty Green had relayed the news back up to us. We had not heard any

incoming shells and wondered what happened. John had arrived into H Company along with me and several other troopers as replacements in March, from Northern Ireland. Sgt Eatman and others in that platoon who were close by and saw him blasted into the air and drop back to earth, his torso split by the blast they were visibly shaken by the explosion and Wands' death. John had entered H Company with me and several others in March '44, and I wanted to go back to see him, but was not permitted to, the advance continued. The medics would take care of his body.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Main street in PONT L'ABBE*

When we halted to rest a short time later, I talked to Second Squad troopers and they thought that Wands might have triggered his gammon grenade that we all carried in our pants pockets to be ready to use against tanks. They said that his rifle stock was split in half and splintered in a number of places which they thought my have hit the grenade as he moved through the hedgerow, and it reminded us that our composition « C » was very powerful stuff. We were reminded to be wary of this dangerous equipment that we were toting, and made us more alert in our maneuvering through the obstacles along the way. Some would have been happy to be rid of them. We were also reminded about the « Achtung Minen » signs that appeared places along which was initially suspected of causing Wands death.

On the 15th of June the 505 PIR was attacking toward St Sauveur le Vicomte we had passed through Crosville We stopped for a rest and while halted I saw that several troopers had located a spring down the hillside and I decided to fill my canteen also. I was halted in my tracks by others in my platoon who handed me their canteens requesting a refill also. I returned up the slope with a gang of water filled canteens dangling from my cartridge belt for my buddies in the first platoon. When we arrived at the high ground at Rauville we were summarily attacked by a flight of four P-47s with 500 pound bombs on their wings. Two bombs were dropped, but missed their targets because orange panels and grenades of orange smoke had suddenly filled the air. The second battalion was already on the bridge over the Douve and had scattered when the planes began their dives. The third battalion was on the hill above and could see all the action below. The pilots had seen the colorful display and veered off tipping their wings in recognition. When the trauma resided we continued on our way down the hill and over the bridge towards St Sauveur le Vicomte following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion into the town. We were ordered to check out several rows of homes, or rather houses that were no longer qualified to be labeled homes due to their excessive damage. It

was a demoralizing site to such carnage wreaked upon these villages and towns in Normandy. Some of the troopers were looking for souvenirs, but I had no wish to remove anything that belonged to those who were dispossessed by the ravages of war. Many of their possessions were strewn all around the rooms we checked.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*SAINT SAUVEUR Le VICOMTE :*  
*Leslie P. CRUISE Jr., Francis B. GAWAN*  
*and Kenneth W. RODDY*

from behind with Gamelcy yelling at me to, » get down you dumb son of a bitch ». Well I got down, but not under my own power, He was a big guy weighing over 200 pounds and I recalled having been tackled playing football by some big guys at Stevens. When I got my breath I berated him for nearly killing me, but in reality he had saved me from being riddled. We had completely surrounded the Krauts and they were forced to surrender. I would ache for a week from that encounter.

H Company was put in Battalion reserve with the other Companies of that unit and the next several days we were couped up in the Bois de Limors area among the woody bush like terrain west of Comm de Moitiers. The rains came in and the weather turned windy and miserable with beaucoup rain pelting our areas, and I later learned of the damage done along the beaches and our mulberry harbor devices. I had a chance to dig a more elaborate foxhole than usual. I even built shelves into the dirt sides to accommodate my smaller equipment. I covered my hole with the GI raincoat that was part of our equipment. Each day one trooper, or another had to trudge the bushy trail to the supply depot of our Company to pick up rations and any ammo needed, and distribute it to our squads that were spread out in that area. I made several trips during our sojourn in that area. The headquarters platoon did a great job of obtaining all the company's food supplies and ammo, particularly Sgt Reid. We were not directly on the battle line, but well within the range of artillery shelling which occurred daily. I recall writing a V-Mail to my mother and mentioning that a shell just passed overhead. I did not note that I dove for my hole to avoid the concussion from the explosion. The Bois de Limors sojourn was one miserable week of lousy weather and spasmodic artillery fire that had us hunkered down. From Hill 131 the Germans had a good view over our area and movements had to be made very carefully.

Just after dark on the 21st of June, the second platoon was to be relieved by G Company troopers. The troopers were out of their foxholes awaiting their relief group to arrive when they were suddenly hit by an artillery barrage with several tree bursts in their midst. They all dove for their foxholes and slit trenches in the confusion. Buck Newsome dove for his slit trench as he was hit in his left arm. His jump suit material was holding his arm together when another trooper landed on top of him. The smell of searing flesh and the cries of those wounded almost nauseated Buck. The shelling subsided as a medic arrived to pull the trooper who was killed off of Buck. The medic tended to Buck, but he told him to take care of the others first. The medic checked the others and found that five had been killed. Buck never knew who landed on him. The medics put Newsome on a stretcher and loaded him onto a jeep and headed for the field hospital. Later at the field hospital he was comforted by Chaplain Wood as he underwent a necessary transfusion for lost blood. We learned later that those killed or who died the next day, were, Verlaine Alton, Valentine Koblica, Peter Massick, Daniel Lei, Harold Reid, Jewel Sprouse, Kenneth Geiler, and Richard Smith. One of the medics was overcome by the trauma, and went to the rear with the jeep.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Verlaine B. ALTON – KIA 22 June 1944*

several incoming shells. When I reached the intersection of a cattle path off to the right that led up to the top of the hill, I encountered a Sargeant from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and stated that Captain Maness wanted to know what what was going on. He stated that they had a problem clearing a pocket of Krauts from a wooded area, but that they had now cleared that area and the top of the hill was in our control. I returned to Captain Maness's position after dodging several more shells and panting I flopped down and reported my information then returned to my place in my squads line.

A short time later our Company moved up the road to the path where I met the Sargeant and we moved on up that trail. I was assigned to the first area along the secluded

About the second of July we were ordered to prepare to give overhead fire for our attacking Battalions to take Hill 131 which overlooked the surrounding areas. We moved part way up that hill and dug in while the rain fell. My foxhole became a mire as fast as I dug into the soil, and in the process of providing supporting fire, I muddied my M-1 rifle and had to clean it before we advanced up the line. I would pop up and fire one round and stoop down again to clean and reload. The machine gun team of Fry and Vassar were laughing at my antics and razing me as their machine gun chattered away. The hole was now half full of water and the time to move up was appreciated. Several shells from mortar rounds landed in our area as we moved forward, but no one was hit by any fragments. The rain had slackened by this time. We were slowed to a halt along a road leading up the hill, and I was ordered by our new Company Commander to move up the road to see what was holding up our advance. Captain Maness had recently assumed command of H Company and he was quit disturbed about our delay, so Pfc Cruise under orders, moved up the road stopping on the left side only long enough to avoid being hit by

trail with Marshall Ellis, another private, by the platoon Sargeant. We located a German slit trench neatly dug into the embankment along the trail at the base of a large tree and decided to commander that location rather than dig a new foxhole. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could in our new home, and scanned the terrain from our new vantage point, and checked out the trail beyond. The hole was dug into the side of the bank on a diagonal and provided some protection from a shell exploding on the roadbed of the trail. The Germans had some good ideas. It provided an excellent view of the area that we had just advanced over. We sat down and I was still catching my breath from my earlier close calls from the krauts artillery shelling during our advance.

About an hour later a messenger came up to our position with copies of « The Stars and Stripes » the army's newspaper which included updates on our progress in Normandy and other fronts along with Bill Mauldin's cartoons of GI Joe. He asked us to pass it on when we finished reading the contents. We promised to do so, as he departed to the rear areas. We relaxed as we began to scan the paper reading the contents of the storms off the Normandy coast and progress on other fronts of the war. We heard the distinct sound of a shell whistling in the wind through the air and it seemed to be coming in our direction. Before we could react a tremendous explosion rent the air and we were covered by flying dirt and debris practically buried in the hole which had caved in on us. Mort had been sitting towards the front of the hole and I had been standing in back of him. I was now sitting stunned in a pile of dirt covering me to my waist, and hundred of pieces of newspaper laying all about. He was almost completely covered by debris. After the initial stunning and ringing in our heads began to wear off, we asked each other if each was OK. What the hell was that, Ellis asked, but I couldn't provide the answer. We both had survived the impact but found that our hearing was more difficult. It was about 10 minutes before we regained our complete senses. We sat there in the mess and finally decided to get busy and clean out our home. We cleaned ourselves off and dug out the new dirt shovelling it into the gutter. When we got out of the hole we found that the shell had landed at the base of a large tree adjacent to our abode, tearing a gaping hole in the base of the tree, which had prevented us from being killed. Our tension was somewhat released as we continued to clear our area, I picked up as many pieces of the Stars and Stripes paper as I could. My intent was to pass the paper on to the next trooper up the trail as requested. We gathered as many pieces as we could into one helmet and transferred them to an envelope we had and I delivered them to the next position up the lane as I had promised, which I did much to their chagrin, and lack of reception to my efforts as they sarcastically greeted me with a lack of humor at our predicament.

During the night of of the 3rd of July our battalion was ordered to change positions with the 508th PIR and along a shaded lane in the dusk as we were relieving that Regiment from their front line postions on hill 131, we were halted as some of their companies past by us to the rear, and in the dimness of the trail I recognized Big Jim Kurz with whom I attended jump school with in 1943 as a barracks buddy in the frying pan area, at Ft Benning Georgia. I ran over to where he was passing stopping him long enough to shake his hand and inquire about his well being and of others we had known in the 541st PIR F Co. He provided some information in the short time we shared, and then had to jog ahead to catch up with his Company A. Some mutual friends had made it, and several had not. I later learned that he had been cited for actions of bravery with the Silver Star.

Later on that day when all resistance by the Germans was completed, H Company moved up to the top of Hill 131 where we could see how the krauts could watch the areas below and Zero on on any movement by us. They could also view the areas to the south towards Le Haye du Puits and over to Monte Castre to the southwest. This was the first time I recall being high enough to see more than several hundred yards and began to dig in along a low hedgerow that formed our front line. I was having great difficulty digging. I kept hitting rocks and tree roots so I opted to settle for a slit trench which wasn't very deep. I had located a fairly large portion of one of our camouflage chutes which I intended to use for cover.



When we first arrived in Normandy on June 6th we would dig in deep, but later on as we advance westward, we dug less and conserved our energy. In fact we sometimes were able to acquire pre-dug holes by the retreating Krauts, and claim them for our use after checking for possible booby traps. We trusted God to protect us and we often wondered about our wisdom in these decisions. Night fell and I rolled myself up in my nylon blanket. I warmed me from the damp night air and I slept until a buddy awakened me for my turn to stand watch at 2 am. I didn't appreciate the night watches because with insufficient sleep, even the trees and shrubs began to march up and down as the night wore on, and you had all kinds of delusions of enemy in the area. I had to rub my eyes regularly to clear my vision. Even though we had driven the krauts out of that area they still might have sent out their own probing patrols to harass us. Your eyes played tricks on you at night because we never got enough sleep to be fully rested. Everything had to be scanned two or three times to be certain that I was not seeing things that were not there. The last order I received from my Sargeant was to not disturb him unless I was certain that there was something really happening out to our front. No false alarms ! When I get back to England, I am going to sleep a week, I thought. I peered through the opening in the hedgerow, viewing the open field below to our front many times and saw nothing, then scanned the hills beyond in the dim light where there was only an occassional sound of vehicles moving. At four am I awakened my relief so he could take over and when I was sure that he was awake and up, I rolled up again in my chute cover and slept.



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*C-47 shot down in Normandy*

It was from these positions that I and others led by Cpl Coddington went on patrol to reconnoiter our front near La Haye du Puits which was located on our right flank below the hill. Captain Maness had ordered the platoon Sgt. Blubaugh to assign troopers for this patrol. Aside from the Cpl Coddington, Franny Gawan and other trooper whom I couldn't recall, were assigned with the fourth was Les Cruise. After dusk we carefully wended our way down the hillside from our high position and into the valley below passing through and hugging several hedge rows as we travelled indirectly across the terrain. There was little chance of us being detected at first since darkness had now settled in. Only a flare in the sky

could reveal our whereabouts. We had departed from our lines about 11 pm checking the password for our return. We reached the grazing fields below and finally arrived at a wide stream about waist deep, which Coddington learned as he stepped into the water to test the depth. We were required to ford to the other bank. Since we were now close to the German outposts we had to be especially quiet.

The rain of the past weeks had provided much water run off draining into the stream, and we had to hold rifles and Thompson subs at high port to keep our ammo dry. One by one we reached the opposite shore and each in turn guarded the bank on both sides until all were across. We watched for counter patrols of the enemy. We were now soaked to the waist and had to pause to let the water run out of our uniforms. We didn't want to be squeaking along in front of the German lines. We used that time to review our location. We passed by what appeared to be a large estate, which I learned from a sign still standing near the entrance was called Blanchlande, and in one of the pastures beyond it there was a large hay shed on fire. We circled around that inferno along the edges of the field to avoid creating a silhouette in the light of the fire. As we moved around the shed we ran across about six dead German soldiers killed earlier from our shelling. Coddington approached cautiously and carefully prodded around for possible booby traps. Satisfied that none had been planted, he searched the corpses for souvenirs of any value. We watched him fish around, and he returned with a watch and a ring which he had to strip the finger on one of them to get his ring as a souvenir and he checked some others for any valuables. I had no desire to hunt for anything, so kept my distance. If we were captured, the krauts would certainly do us in with souvenirs in our possession. The bodies were beginning to bloat and stink. Not a pretty sight to look on. I recalled that our casualties appeared the same from earlier days in Normandy.

We scouted the perimeter of the field that was adjacent to the residence and stealthily move up the grade toward the German positions. About a third of the way up the grade we heard the distinct sound of German voices. We had come far enough to locate their positions which was our purpose and we crawled ala infiltration course practice along on our stomachs past one of their outposts for about a hundred yards until we were clear of their sight line. We had approached to within 100 feet of their outpost without being discovered. Now, for us to return unseen was the problem. We scouted along their line for about another 100 yards to be sure that we had left the fire area well behind us, then we turned towards our own lines at a convenient hedgerow cover. I was happy to see the cover that was afforded by the growth where we finally able to stand upright. I must have picked up some additional mud on my wet uniform from the crawl and wanted to rid myself of that excess baggage. We kept moving stopping several times to be sure we were all together and check our route and watch our rear. There could be counter patrols by the Germans. We arrived back at the creek we had crossed earlier, but at a better location for crossing. There was a heavy tree trunk laying across the water which was easier for us to cross and keep dry. Coddington cautioned us to cross one at a time and provide cover from the other side to those crossing later. All safely maneuvered the natural bridge and crossed to the other side. We proceeded up the hill towards our lines to report our findings.

A soft but strong voice called out in the darkness, » HALT ! , who goes there ? « , was the question, and we realized that we had reached our line sooner than anticipated and were almost at loss for the sign and counter sign for clearance. Those were summarily given, and we then proceeded to cross into our territory and reported to the C.O. Maness. He quizzed us on our findings, and dismissed all but Coddington, who provided him with additional data that we had learned along with his calculation of the enemys line location on the map the Captain had. I arrived back at my squads position and related my experiences to any who were awake, and then grabbed my piece of chute, rolled up in it and slept with my head in my helmet and my raincoat below me.

The morning of July 4th arrived early, about 8am, with an opening barrage of artillery from our long Tom's and 155s. It seemed like a celebration, and indeed it was the Fourth of July. The gradual build up of men and materials was beginning to be felt with the support that we could now count upon. The area that we had patrolled a short time before was inundated with exploding shells, some with close proximity fuses exploding above the ground wreaking havoc among the Krauts. The artillery was right on target. We were sure that the enemy would be wiped out under such a shower of hot metal and percussion crescendos. The hillside of Monte Castre was white from all the puffs of smoke filling the air.

We had sent patrols into La Haye du Puits during the first few days of July and some resistance was encountered by the Germans from the surrounding areas, and we would have to ferret them out, or so we assumed. In spite of the rumors of relief, we were expecting to continue on the battle line. There didn't appear to be any organized relief in sight, however, the relief we sought was about to take effect. We had seen infantry troops arriving in our rear areas from Utah Beach, and the latest rumor indicated that the 8th Infantry Division was to take over our sector shortly. On the morning of July 9th elements of the 8th Infantry Division arrived in our area and passed through our line to continue the war with our good wishes, and pats on the back along with some good natured humor, we sent them onward to the Krauts. The battle was now carried beyond us as they wended their way down the slopes towards Lithaire, and La Haye du Puits. We would now be assigned to the rear as we remained on line for one more day to be certain that the unit replacing us would keep moving forward, and had a chance to establish their own lines. We had some time to relax somewhat knowing that we would be returning to England, and the fear and tension of the past thirty three days was lowered.

On the tenth of July mid morning, we began to gather all our equipment for our trek to the rear areas, sometimes walking sometimes riding in our regimental GI trucks to assembly areas set up in a norman farm field. Many had fallen asleep in the truck rides. We camped over night, and the next day we were afforded the opportunity to clean up for the first time in 34 days. The Army had set up a series of trucks with water power and we all had a chance to shower and don new OD uniforms with field jackets and clean up our boots. Some needed new boots from their old worn ones. I cleaned my boots which were in reasonable shape and coated them with waterproofing once again. We had duffle bags available to load our jump suits and other equipment in for transport back to England. All ammunition and grenades etc were left at an ammo dump earlier. We kept our rifles and side arms with us. We were now ready to move out with the survivors of our Company which numbered about 60 paratroopers of H Company, 3rd Battalion, 505th PIR our days in Normandy over.

It was quite a revelation when we reached the Utah Beach areas to see all the equipment that had been brought ashore as well as how organized it was in city like blocks. Huge piles of supplies and material were stacked in neat rows and the streets formed were filled with moving vehicles loaded with all that they could carry to the forward units. There were troops moving in single file up the dunes and to a bivouac areas assigned. LSTs were jammed against the mulberry dock units unloading their cargoes. Out to sea hundreds of ships were lined along the horizon awaiting their turn to bring in their cargo. Many obstacles littered the beach areas, but most were piled out of the traffic lanes. This was my first glimpse of the beach. It was barely visible on the night of June 5th into the early hours of June 6th. We did see the silhouettes of the ships off shore, but our western approach prohibited view of Utah.

I was amazed at the sight that greeted us, and was reassured of our success by this tremendous display of back up power. We waved to some nearby tanks and troops moving inland, with shouts of encouragement. They would soon join in the continuing battle to press our advantage. The ever present MPs were busy directing traffic to keep it moving. Once the beach forces had reached our airborne unit on the 8th of June, I was no longer concerned

about the final outcome of the invasion success. This panorama really solidified that assurance of complete victory in Europe.

We wended our way across the beach to one of the mulberry docking units. Once on the metal grating of the unit we had to balance ourselves from the sea swells of the tide that came and went as the sea rolled to and fro. It was not as secure as it had appeared from land. They had been twisted from the violent storms of mid June when we were holed up on the Bois de Limors. We made it through with some being wet from the splashing foam of salt water. We boarded the LST and when all hands were accounted for, we lifted anchor and slowly moved from the docking area, bidding a silent goodbye to Normandy and those we left behind ; ALTON, BECKWITH, CARPENTER, DELANO, GEILER, GRAY, HARDING, KOBILCA, LEI, MASSICK, MATESICK, McNEIL, REID, SMITH, SPROUSE, VARGAS, WANDS, and WHITE.

*\*When we returned to England, we learned that some of our troopers who went into Normandy were unaccounted for. Among those missing where the following :  
Fred W. Randall, Martin Finkelstein, R.V.Milligan, Lt. Alexander Townsend.*

## **Leslie Palmer CRUISE**



Photo Courtesy : Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr

*Spring 1943 Fort Bragg – H Company – 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment*

*I would like to personally thank Leslie Palmer Cruise, Jr. to publish his memoirs about these 35 days of combat he spent with his comrades, in Normandy in June 1944 to liberate our parents.*

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