

The following document is the day-to-day diary of Captain William E. Waters, who was the commanding officer of G Company/331st Infantry during the Normandy and Brittany campaigns of the 83rd Division. Captain Waters wrote these letters to his wife in 1945, exactly one year after the daily actions occurred (probably because of security restrictions). His wife typed up the battle field sections of the letters to produce this record. Many thanks to Bill Waters and his mother Miriam (Mimi) Kelley for their permission to place this document on line.

" A YEAR AGO TODAY "

by Captain William E. Waters

June 25

A year ago tonight I was riding in the front seat of a 2½ ton truck that was rolling closer and closer to the sounds of artillery being exchanged. It was pouring down rain and the night was as black as an ink-well. We passed through Carentan where I had my first good smell of death from the rotting bodies of cattle that had stood in the path of exploding artillery shells. It was the beginning of quite an experience.

June 26

A year ago tonight I had just finished my first day of actual contact with the enemy. We had been shelled a few times and about this time of night the enemy patrols were starting in to heckle us. Nothing of importance actually happened but it was still very exciting because we were in the war at last. I had a beautiful fox-hole. It was dug down and then tunneled into a hedge-row. Being very green I felt pretty safe whenever I crawled into it. I discovered my error later when I saw hedge-rows blown apart by exploding shells.

July 4.

What a quiet day this has been in comparison with last year's 4th of July. A year ago we launched our first attack and were disastrously beaten. Thirty minutes after we had jumped off both Dick and Ralph, who were leading my two assault platoons, had been killed. They were leading their platoons in a charge across a swamp 600 yds. wide, 2000 yds. long, flat as a billiard table, and covered by dozens of machine guns manned by SS troopers and paratroopers who had had three weeks to prepare their positions. Both officers gave their lives gloriously.

July 8

A year ago yesterday we made the longest gain that we had made up to that time. We drove forward all day long and that evening found us some 1500 yards ahead of the place from which we had started.



Just as we had pulled up for the night a German officer came driving up the road on a motorcycle as though he owned the world. One of our men clipped him neatly between the eyes with a well-aimed shot and Hamm had his motor-cycle before it had stopped sliding. A few moments later some Germans in a Volkswagon were just as neatly accounted for. About that time all hell broke loose. There were two German tanks right in our area. They had been sitting there with their motors shut off. Suddenly, they started firing and turned their motors on. Lt. Lancaster, the anti-tank platoon leader, wheeled one of his guns into position right under their noses and knocked out one of the tanks. This was the first time that I had ever experienced the sensation of hearing a tank burn. There's no other sound in war that gives me such complete satisfaction. The flames shoot high into the air and their crackling adds a fitting background to the explosion of the ammunition within the tank. I took Lt. Davis' platoon and drove off the infantry that had accompanied the tank---then we settled down for the night. Davis and I matched to see who would enter the Jerry dug-out, that we intended to occupy, in order to check it for booby traps. I lost---fortunately, no booby traps. Two dug-outs away contained a small A.P. mine that slightly wounded one of my men, though.

Early the next morning, we were ordered to pull back a 1000 yds. as a safety precaution for a bombing mission that was to be flown that morning. There's nothing more heart breaking than to withdraw from ground that you've fought to get and know that you'll have to fight for it again on your way back up. The big picture called for a bombing mission---we little picture men were not important---except to ourselves.

I ran into Bart back in the assembly area and we exchanged some pleasantries. This was the first time that we had seen each other since leaving England. Shortly afterward he was hit.

The attack plan that morning was unique---the regiment was to attack in a column of battalions with the second bn. leading; the second bn. was to attack in a column of companies with "G" company leading. I broke up the monotony by attacking with two reinforced platoons abreast and one back.



The bombing mission was late and we were ordered to begin the attack immediately--that was a mistake. We moved faster than anyone had thought possible. Dellow was leading the left assault platoon and as always was running around like a wild man, reconnoitering well out ahead of his lead scouts. I had given him hell for this before and he'd always say "Dammit, Chief, the men are scared to death. If I wait for them to move forward this war will last forever and I'm anxious to get home." He sure had plenty of guts.

We had advanced about a thousand yards when I called for a temporary halt to check ammo and tighten up ~~four~~ front a bit. Also, I wanted to tell Harry to stay back where he belonged instead of exposing himself so recklessly. I checked with Nelson and was on my way over to Harry. He was sitting on top of a hedge-row with his back toward the enemy in order to show his men that they had nothing to be afraid of. He saw me coming about a hundred yards away and started grinning because he knew that he was going to catch hell. About that time a red smoke shell from our own artillery landed in between us. This marked the target for our dive bombers--somebody had made a mistake. Down they swarmed on us.

I watched one plane diving straight at me, saw him cut loose his bomb, watched it hurtling down, and knew that it would be close. There was nothing for me to do but lie down flat on the ground for I was in the middle of a field. I relived my life during that short interval of time. The bomb landed within thirty yards of me and blew out a crater about the size of our kitchen at home. The concussion lifted me up in the air and knocked me a little goofy. Within six inches of my head were two huge chunks of dirt either of which would have killed me had they been 9 inches closer. I'll always know that it was the prayer that you said for me at that particular moment that gave me my life. It's just not possible for a man to remain alive when such a large bomb lands that close while he is in the open.

Harry was not so fortunate. One of the five bombs that dropped on us buried him in the hedgerow.

I tried to go forward to help some of my men who had been mangled but was stopped by a swarm of angry bees that had been set in motion by the concussion of the bombs. My face and hands were covered with



them and they were all down inside my shirt. Groggy as I was, I started to fight them. They stung me into complete madness. Here again I cannot understand why I did not die from the poison that they injected for I must have been stung 2 or 3 hundred times. Later on, one bee sting on my hand caused it to swell to half again its normal size.

Some of my men saw me waving my arms fighting the bees and, not realizing what was happening, thought that the bombing had driven me crazy. They came running up and tried to knock me out. Then I had to fight them as well as the bees.

Finally I brought order out of this chaos and we pushed off again. At this point, Lt. Davis was the only officer that I had left. He didn't get hit until the next day. Five days of combat--three officers killed and two wounded. It wasn't until four days later that I got hit thus giving the company officers a perfect score. And it wasn't until a week later that I was hit again giving me a jump on the new batch of officers. However, to a man they all caught up.

At A short time after we had gotten started again, Davis radioed to me that they couldn't advance any further because they were pinned down. When he used the expression "pinned down" I really lit into him. Everytime a sniper opened fire or an artillery round came in people started screaming that they were "pinned down." So, when he used that expression, I really turned the air waves blue. I finished up by telling him that I was on my way over to him and that his platoon had better be moving forward when I got there. I got within ten yards of him when a machine-gun opened up on me. I hit the ground and started to crawl up to him but it was no use. They had me spotted and every time I moved a muscle they cut loose at me. All of this time Nelson was laughing like hell at me--he was behind a little rise in the ground that protected him-- and saying "What's the matter, Chief, you pinned down?" I couldn't help but laugh with him. I finally made a run for it and together we worked out a plan that started us rolling again.

We pushed forward a few more hedge-rows paying the normal price for each and then buttoned up for the night.

July 9

A year ago today we were advancing on Sainteny, France with orders to take the town at all costs. My company had led the attack the day before so we were in reserve that particular day. I was to follow the assault companies at about 500 yards. They got to within about 800 yards of the town and were held up by fire coming from their left flank. Col. Faber called for me to come forward. A little incident happened on my way up to him that I didn't think too much about at the time, but which later scared hell out of me. When I was within about 50 yards of the Col. I stopped for no reason at all and looked back. Just as I started forward again the hedge-row about 20 yards away from me was ripped apart by a terrific explosion. Our own engineers had blown it with a load of dynamite in order to make a passage way for the tanks. Had I not stopped when I did, I would have been right opposite the explosion and been blown to pieces.

Col. Faber wanted me to create a diversionary attack on the left flank in order to relieve the pressure on the rest of the battalion. I moved into position and reported all set. Just as we were ready to jump off, I was ordered to hold up. The artillery was not available to support me at that time. I waited for over an hour and was finally ordered to make the attack without support. By that time the enemy knew we were there and were all set for us. They had moved three tanks up behind the second hedge-row over from us and some machine guns behind the next hedge-row. We assaulted and they cut us down like flies. Lt. Davis was hit and Lt. Waclo, the platoon leader of the heavy machine gun platoon that I had with me, had his leg broken. We gained the next hedge-row and was blasting it apart with cannon fire, and the other two circled around in rear of us and cut us down with machine gun fire. I ran about a hundred yards over to the right to try to get an anti-tank gun, that Lt. Lancaster had brought up, swung around into position. It was impossible because an enemy tank less than 50 yds. away was spraying it with machine gun fire. Lanky was hit so I had to give up trying to get the gun around. I went back to the center of the company and all of the men that were able to, had withdrawn. My first sergeant was trying to pick Lt. Waclo up and carry him back. The three tanks were bearing down on him so I jumped up on the hedge-row and



started firing at the tanks in order to attract their attention. I succeeded in drawing two of them away from him. When they would swing their cannon toward me I'd jump down behind the hedge-row and run 15 or 20 yards to the left while they'd blast the spot where I'd been. Then I'd jump back up on the hedge-row and fire at them again.

Sgt. Gaynor, my 1st Sgt., succeeded in jumping over the hedge-row with Lt. Waclo just before the third tank ran him down. The muzzle of the tank cannon was right over his head where he could have reached up and chinned himself on it. The hedge-row kept it from depressing to where it could fire on him.

I looked around then and there was not a man left but myself and my runner so I started back to try to round up some of my men. I searched every where and finally found one man. By that time I was frantic. I took all the grenades that my two men had, sent them to report to the battalion commander then started out with the idea in mind of killing as many Germans as possible before they killed me. About five minutes later I came upon one of my sergeants who had rounded up about fifteen men and who said that he knew where there were about 15 more. With this news I abandoned my solo mission for I once again had a company to command--30 men.---One of the officers of this battalion proudly wears a silver star that he received for rounding up 12 more of my men about six hedge-rows back and bringing them forward later.

As far as the battalion was concerned, the attack was a success for it enabled the other two companies to move into Sainteny without a shot being fired at them. As far as I was concerned, I had no officers left and less than sixty men out of an original company of over two hundred. This, after five days of fighting.

We moved into Sainteny, and were there about half an hour when there appeared a big Tiger tank, rolling into town. He pulled right into the square and started blasting every building within reach. We had one bazooka to fight him with. Harry Fleming, our artillery liaison officer, fired three bazooka rounds at him and all three bounced off. With that, though, he started to withdraw. It was then that Col. Faber started chasing him with his pistol trying to jump on top of the tank and shoot the men inside. He had more guts than six normal men. It was this action for which he received the D.S.C. Next day he was killed.



Then they started shelling us. To this day it is agreed that we received our worst shelling in Sainteny. That night I spent the night curled up in a small, damp foxhole beside a blown up Church. The artillery poured in incessantly.

July 10

A year ago today we were in Sainteny suffering the heaviest artillery barrage that we received before or since. I had my company in a field directly behind a demolished Church. I was set up for housekeeping in a fox-hole that was anything but comfortable. Early in the morning a battalion from the 329th assaulted through our motor-pool using marching fire. Someone had neglected to tell them that we had already taken the town.

Company G of the 329th moved into and occupied the same field that my company was occupying--two company's "G" in the same field. You can imagine the confusion when, later in the day, both of us received about 50 replacements. When it came time to move out, the new men knew that they were in G Co. but they had no idea which regiment. We split them up and went on fighting the war. Personnel section spent weeks getting the records straightened out.

A sniper wounded a man in the area and Hamm and I went out to look for him. We searched the area for a couple of hours but had no luck.

Col. Faber was killed that day. He answered the phone during an artillery barrage and the room where he was got a direct hit. He had made the statement the day before that he didn't expect to live through it all. It was a safe statement to make at the time.

I saw my first German P W that day. He was a member of the Hitler Jugend-- a part of the SS division that we were fighting. He looked about 17 years old, wore glasses, and was very arrogant. His face was completely impassive and his answers to all questions asked him were lies.

Our new regimental commander--the 4th in six days ( we had 11 in two weeks) came down to see us. He was killed on the way back to the regimental C.P.



Henry Weinhardt volunteered to take a message back to regiment that afternoon. He was killed on the way back.

A regimental staff officer came down to see us. He was hysterical with fear. During one heavy barrage, he pushed Capt. Fleming's radio operator out from under the cellar steps and crawled in himself. Eight months later he sold somebody on a different version of the story and was awarded the Silver Star for that day's work. It must have been something else for which he received the decoration.

I spent the afternoon crawling around to each of my new men and giving them a word of encouragement. It had been five days since I had shaved or washed last so my appearance was none to reassuring.

A shell hit a small brick shed about six yards from my fox-hole and buried two of my men in the debris. I dug them out and they were unhurt.

About midnight our new battalion commander crawled into my fox-hole to get acquainted with me. What a character he was/ About the only thing he ever said was " Is that incoming or outgoing mail?(artillery) Which is the safest side of the fox-hole?" He lasted a day and a half and was then transferred to the third battalion where he was captured a few days later. I hated him from the start because he kept calling me " son". I was an old man at the time and didn't relish that childish term. Also, I was pretty punchy. Just before leaving he asked me in the darkness. " son, when was the last time you shaved". " About 5 days ago, sir, I think." " You will report to me at 0530 in the morning freshly washed and shaved. Good-night, son"---Three and a half hours later I got up and shaved a five day's growth using cold water out of my canteen and timing my strokes with the incoming mail. Then I reported to him in a shell-hole about 800 yards away. " Son, you've got to be more careful when you shave. A big boy like you shouldn't cut himself. Ha/ Ha/ ( that was a joke) My God/ Is that incoming artillery or outgoing? You'd better get down, son/"---Youngster that I was, I was old enough to know that it was outgoing so I stayed standing.

All day long I thought of my new men who were hit before they had even finished digging themselves a fox-hole and was very unhappy.

July 11

A year ago today we were still in Sainteny and still being pounded with artillery. Joe Macaluso, who had been hit six days earlier, returned for duty. I was certainly glad to see him. In addition, I also received a replacement officer, Lt. Noah. The next day he went down fighting with about six machine gun slugs in him. In the few hours that he was with us he gave a damned fine account of himself.

I spent the day checking our defensive position and talking to the men---especially the new ones. They were having a hard time of it having been brought up into a place where the artillery fell almost constantly.

Toward evening I saw a patrol coming in from our right flank. It was a friendly patrol so I waited impatiently to see who it was. As they came nearer the man in the lead looked more and more familiar. Finally, I was able to recognize him. It was Joe Bush, one of my best friends during the three years from 1936 to '39 when I was an enlisted man with the 11th Inf. It was the first time that we had seen each other since I had left the company to go to the academy. We held open house in a fox-hole and had a regular old home week. He was now a 2nd Lt. and had been assigned as a replacement officer to the 22nd Inf. the day before. The 22nd was on our right and he was bringing a patrol over to establish contact with us.

Other than these few things the day does not lend itself to an interesting detailed account. We stayed in our holes as much as possible venturing forth only when necessary. We were serenaded all day long with the S W I S H--- B W O O M---Z I N G of the artillery coming in, exploding, and the shrapnel flying around.

Do not miss tomorrow's narrative--I am wounded for the first time in the morning, walk into a machine-gun nest in the afternoon, and we win our first decisive victory--as far as we "little picture" men are concerned--that evening in a battle that has been known ever since as "The Turkey Shoot."

July 12

A year ago today was a pretty full day. Our battalion went into division reserve with orders that we could be committed only by the general,



general, himself. That sounded like music to our ears. We pulled back about a thousand yards behind Sainteny into an assembly area. Just as we reached the area, word came that the general had found a spot in which to use us.

I started back to receive the attack order. Just as I passed through an opening in a hedge-row---Zing--- a rifle bullet hit me in the left leg, knocking me down. Fortunately, it hit me a glancing blow and did very little damage. An aid man patched me up and I was all set.

The plan called for my company to move out immediately and seize a forward assembly area from which the battalion would launch its attack. I took the assembly area without much difficulty, out-posted it, and waited for the remainder of the battalion to come up and pass through me. But such was not to be the case. I was ordered to continue the attack, so out we moved. About 800 yds. forward I ran into the remnants of B Company. Some how they had gotten off the beam and had run into a veritable hornets nest. Most of their men were lying dead or wounded out in the next field. The company commander and some 27 men were left. They had been butting their heads up against this spot all day long. The situation did not look pleasant.

I went forward on reconnaissance and got to within about 100 yds. of where the Germans were dug in. I spent about an hour crawling up and down the hedge-row until I had most of their positions figured out. There was one spot that I wasn't quite sure of. I figured that it contained a machine-gun. In order to make certain one way or the other I crawled forward through an opening in the hedge-row, and then raised up to take a good look. It was,---they spotted me, and cut loose. I dropped to the ground and the bullets sped harmlessly over my head. I dropped so quickly that my rifle flew out of my hand and my helmet flew off of my head. It would have been embarrassing as hell to go back without these two items so I crawled around retrieving them. All of this time the machine-gun was barking away furiously. However, the gunner must have been as frightened as I was for he continued to shoot six or eight feet over my head. It was his last mistake for I adjusted mortar fire on him just before I launched my attack and got a direct hit.



Having made my plans, I brought the platoon leaders up and issued my order. One platoon- the first- was to lay down a base of fire from the hedge-row along which I had made my reconnaissance, the other platoon--the third--was to swing around from the right and come into the position from the flank. What was left of the weapons platoon was to aid the first in establishing a base of fire. This took care of every body for I no longer had a second platoon.

Everything was set and I gave the signal to open fire. The plan worked beautifully. The enveloping platoon caught them completely napping. Led by the platoon leader and platoon sergeant they charged into the position which consisted of emplacements dug in along a sunken road. As the third platoon passed in front of the first they assaulted also. It was like shooting fish in a barrel. The Jerry's who tried to run were cut down like stalks of wheat; those who stayed in their holes were bayoneted and grenaded. It was a field day for us for this was the first decisive victory that we had won.

We had one bad moment. A machine gun farther up the road cut loose at us. His first burst passed between my legs. Another click of elevation and we'd have had to give up the idea of raising a family. A man a few feet away from me was not so fortunate--he'll have to resort to adoption in order to be a father.

The machine-gun caught both the platoon leader and platoon sergeant. Neither one was mortally wounded. Only two men were killed--my radio operator and one of my sergeants.

By that time it was growing dark and starting to rain so we holed up for the night. That battle is legendary within the company and is referred to as " The Turkey Shoot."

July 13

A year ago today my company was in battalion reserve. We moved across a small swamp and up to the edge of a large swamp about 2000 yards away. Other than interdictory artillery fire, we met no real enemy resistance.

That afternoon we took up positions with the battalion left flank on the edge of the large swamp and dug in. My company occupied two sunken roads that crossed in our area. Late in the afternoon we were attacked by tanks. The picture of one of the tanks appeared in



practically every large newspaper and magazine in the States about a month later. (WE knocked it out the next day with the platoon of 4-2 chemical mortars that were attached to my company) It was when I saw this picture that I completely lost faith in newspaper write-ups. Right now I have a copy of " The National Geographic Magazine" in front of me which contains the picture. The caption reads " these G I's fighting the battle of the hedge-rows in Normandy charge across a road under enemy fire. They are advancing on St. Lo." This comes closest to being the truth of all the stories that I saw connected with the picture. Most of the write-ups claimed that the G I's were dough-boys who had just knocked out the tank and were now attacking the next hedge-row. Actually, the tank had been knocked out two weeks prior to the time the picture was taken; the G I's were artillerymen out of Capt. Fleming's liaison section who happened to be in the vicinity at the time; they are attacking from the side of the road which had been held by the enemy; we were not advancing on St. Lo; and the only reason that there isn't the charred body of a dead German in the picture is because the men refused to take him out of the ditch and put him in the road when the photographer asked them to.

But to get back to the day's events---In the midst of the tank attack, Col. Mac Donald called over the phone for me to report to him. I started to explain what was happening, but he shut me up and told me to get over there immediately. Just as I passed one of the anti-tank guns attached to me, the tank scored a direct hit on it with a cannon shot. Running and ducking I made my way to the battalion C.P. Upon arrival there, I was told to go to the aid of F. Co. who were being driven back by tanks. At that I blew my stack, explained that I, too, was being attacked by tanks, that if they wanted to see me from now on they could come up to where I was instead of taking me away from my company. This outburst stopped them and in the ensuing silence I took off back to the company.

The two remaining A T guns were moved into better positions, some mines were laid, and two bazooka teams were sent out to the OPL. With that, we settled down for the night.

Since July 4th, I 've been reliving those hectic days of a year ago in my memory. A few days ago I decided to write down some of the



Happenings while I could still remember them. It may be that some day in the future I may have cause to remember them. There's always the possibility that some of my men carried as missing in action may never turn up. In that event, the War Department will undoubtedly make an effort to trace down events leading up to the time that they were reported as missing. For this reason I have retained the maps I used and the notes I took as a company commander. To supplement these, I am also writing down as much as I remember now in the form of a letter to you. This serves a dual purpose for I figure that you are probably interested in some of the things that happened to me during those extremely hectic days when the scale that kept Life and Death in neat equipoise could be unbalanced during any second of the day.

July 14

A year ago today we renewed our attack. I drew the pole position on the right in the attack plan. The company strength was so depleted that I decided on a somewhat different plan than we had been using. Holding the company well back, I sent a reconnaissance patrol forward to try and locate the enemy. T/ Sgt. Singleton and three other men made up the patrol.

Sgt. Singleton was the best platoon sergeant I've ever seen both in garrison and in combat. He was a disciplinarian in garrison and a fighting man in combat. He hated Germans with an unsurpassed hatred. Each time that he killed one, he carved a notch on his rifle. However, he wouldn't carve the notch unless he could walk up and kick the body in order to make certain that the Jerry was dead. When I left the company, he had 14 notches cut.

When all the other officers had been either killed or wounded Sgt. Singleton and I ran the company together. We were closer than brothers could ever be. He was a rough talking, tobacco chewing, fighter whose size was in his courage for he was a small man. One time he told me---it was after I had been hit the first time---that he prayed for me every night and that if anything ever happened to me, he'd desert.



I put him in for a battle field commission. The day that he was called back for his physical examination he had just finished taking a town on the Moselle River in Luxembourg. His theory was-- fight like hell to take a town, then after it was taken and properly secured, hunt up a good looking woman who was filled with emotion at just being liberated and who had a cellar full of wine, and proceed to celebrate his latest victory. That is what he had done that day. When he came back to the battalion C.P., he was very much flushed with victory. He proceeded to give everybody hell for having broken up his party just to give him a physical examination for a commission. With that, he hopped in his jeep and headed back to his party. No amount of persuasion later could make him change his mind about accepting a commission. He set a precedent in " G " company. Five men were offered commissions at one time or another and all five turned them down.

While we were still in the vicinity of Luxembourg holding a defense line along the Moselle, we were relieved, temporarily, and went down into France for training in the Maginot Line. Singleton stepped on the warhead of an A T grenade and had his foot blown off.

But to get back to the events of a year ago today--he took the patrol out and found an enemy machine gun dug in and just waiting for us. Before they knew that there were any Americans about, they were dead and the machine-gun was knocked out.

We moved up that far without mishap but were stopped a couple of hedgerows beyond that. After repeated attacks we succeeded in driving them back a couple of hedge-rows and then holed up for the night.

July 16

A year ago today I became a Captain and was wounded for the second time. I did not know of my promotion, though, until a few days later. The wound was only superficial. An artillery shell exploded near by and some of the shrapnel inbedded itself in my right leg. The aid man fixed me up and a few days later I went back to the aid station and had the doctor remove the pieces of shrapnel that I had been unable to get out.

We renewed our attack that morning and moved forward about three hedge-rows where we were stopped cold. It was eleven days later that we finally took that next hedge-row. Then it was only because the big break through had been made and the Jerries in front of us withdrew.

Late that night I was ordered to withdraw about 1200 yards. I tried to talk them out of it for I knew that sooner or later I'd have to retake that ground. However, the big boys felt that we were out ahead much too far. So back we went.

One of my best men met an untimely death that day. He was hit, fell forward into a water-hole, and drowned. I found him on one of my rounds.

July 16

A year ago today I completed my withdrawal that I told you about in yesterday's letter. It took me most of the night for it's quite a job to break contact with the enemy when you're only a hundred yds. apart. It must be accomplished without his knowledge else he'll attack in the midst of it and have you at a great disadvantage. I made my reconnaissance early in the evening then took the leaders back to show them the route. As a double precaution, to prevent them from getting lost in the darkness, I marked the route with pieces of paper and rags tied on the bushes. We executed the withdrawal and then went into reserve. Other than a few artillery rounds that took their normal toll, another inevitable sniper with his harassing fire, nothing much happened.

I located my C. P. in an old abandoned shell-hole, covered it over with logs and dirt, and proceeded to set up housekeeping once again. That Afternoon I shaved --the first time since Sainteny--and bathed--the first time in about a month. The bathing was quite an operation. We found a pump in working order near an old blown up house. I took three men with me and while one of us took a bath the other three outposted him. The reason for this precaution--the sniper that I mentioned awhile ago was working in that area. Our bath tub, of course, consisted of one each G. I. steel helmet. At any rate, we were able to remove one layer of dust.

While we were fighting in the hedge-rows we carried no extra



equipment at all--no packs, no mess gear, no toilet articles, nothing but a canteen and ammunition. I always wore a wool undershirt and a combat jacket, even though it was July and the sun beat down every day, in order to keep a little warm at night. Around 2 o'clock in the morning it used to get pretty cold. By pulling the combat jacket up over my head I could manage to keep a little warm.

However, I usually did not have to worry about this. Invariably, if we didn't make a night attack, I had to report back to the battalion Cq P. at 3 o'clock in the morning to get the next day's attack order. Since it didn't get dark until around eleven o'clock at night, there wasn't much time for sleeping between then and the time I had buttoned up my defenses for the night.

The only concession that I made myself in the way of toilet articles was a tooth brush. This I carried stuck down in my shirt pocket. No tooth powder--just the brush. A half a dozen times a day I would take it out and scrub my teeth vigorously. Whenever we would hit some rough going that required some concentration on my part, I'd take the tooth brush out and start scrubbing. This I did without realizing it until I caught myself. With a K-ration diet and this method of cleaning, my teeth felt as though they were all nerve in a few weeks.

I wonder what I wrote to you in my letters of a year ago this time. I remember that I was trying hard not to let you know what danger I was in. I wonder now well I succeeded. There were times when I was pretty punchy from lack of sleep and all that was going on. It may be that I gave the show away during some of those times.

July 17

My little series of what happened a year ago today is going to be rather dull for awhile. During the next week we held a defensive position waiting for the day of the big break-through. We knew that something big was in the air but we didn't know what it was or what part we were to play in it. Each day we expected to jump off once again in the attack. Had we known that it would be a week before this happened we could have relaxed somewhat.

A year ago today we did have a little excitement. Out of nowhere, five enormous shells dropped into our area. Fortunately, four

of them were duds. One, however, landed on the road about 75 yds. from my C.P. and blew a hole in the hedge-row. This was good, though, because it provided a place where my jeeps could drive through when coming to the C.P.

At the time I was having a meeting with all my officers and non-coms just outside the shell-hole that I was using as a C.P. One of the shells landed within 20 Yds. of us. Luckily, it was a dud else the privates would have had to take over the company. Although it didn't explode, the impact, when it hit the ground, was so great that it jarred the cover off of my C.P.---about two feet thick of logs and dirt. The shell was about eight inches in diameter and about two feet long. Each time that I passed it during the next week I trod very lightly so as not to jar the firing pin loose.

Another funny thing happened yesterday, a year ago, that I forgot to mention. I received a box from you containing five bottles of Jergen's Lotion. I had asked you to send me some while I was in England. What a razzing I took from the Men/ It had been five weeks since I had had a bath. At the time I hardly looked like a man who had any use for Jergens face lotion. It doesn't sound so funny now, but at the time, we almost split our sides with laughter.

July 18

A year ago today we were still sitting and waiting --for what, we didn't know. After so many days of attacking we welcomed this respite.

During this time I worked out a plan for attacking and reducing hedge-rows. I went over it again and again with the men so that they would understand it perfectly. At first glance it seemed rather involved, but once it was unfolded and everyone got the big picture, it was simple enough to be workable. The men greeted it with enthusiasm once they mastered it. For purposes of identification, I labeled it " Plan M ." No one but me ever knew that that " M" actually stood for " Miriam " .

About noon we were startled out of our reveries by the appearance of four enemy planes flying just above the tree tops. They made one pass at us and then continued on their way. No one was hurt and all of us breathed a sigh of relief when they disappeared in the distance.



Hamm pulled another one of his stunts that day. He climbed aboard a bicycle that he had picked up someplace, rode through a terrific mortar barrage to the battalion C.P., delivered a message, and then turned around and rode back through the same barrage. To look at him you would have thought that it was rain falling instead of shells. As always, he was unscathed.

July 19

A year ago today I moved one of my platoons around on the right flank to strengthen the battalion defensive position. Other than that nothing unusual happened. We were still waiting and wondering. I met Col. York for the first time and was very much impressed.

July 20

A year ago today I went back to the regimental C.P. and while there, learned that I was a Captain. I replaced the one bar with two but retained the one bar, pinning it underneath the flap of my pocket. I figured that it had brought me some luck so continued to wear it. When Joe Macaluso was promoted to 1st Lt. I gave him the bar. Then, when he was promoted to Captain, I gave him my original Captain's bar. That way, the same set of bars commanded C Co. all through combat.

While back at the regimental C.P. we were given a hint about the forthcoming operation that was to result in the Allied breakthrough. We were ordered to be ready to re-new our attack at any time.

July 21

A year ago I moved two of my platoons forward and occupied the defensive sector that F Co. had been holding. We completed the change over without mishap. In my reconnaissance I discovered that there was a mistake in the map that we were using. About three of the hedge-rows shown were inaccurately drawn on the map. However, this was the first time that we had discovered an error in the maps. That speaks well of our map-makers for we were using a <sup>1</sup>/<sub>25000</sub> scaled Battle Map that showed even the separate hedge-rows.

We were still in the dark as to what the future held but it became more and more evident that it was something big. There was a tenseness in the air that was portentous of something.

July 22

A year ago today we were placed on a one hour alert. That meant that at any moment we might receive orders to renew our attack. It was difficult to work up an enthusiasm over this prospect for it had been almost pleasant the past few days with nothing to worry about except an occasional artillery barrage, patrol, or sniper. As it turned out, we still had a few days left before we jumped again. As I look back we had a pretty long break. But you can't enjoy something like that when you're expecting to move out at any time.

July 23

A year ago today we again did nothing but sit and sweat. An enemy patrol was repulsed and one of ours was successful. The tension mounted, and we waited. I went over "Plan M" with my officers and non-coms once again. Everyone wrote another letter home. Some of the letters described the writers as "standing in a sea of blood with dead Germans floating all around me"---others merely wrote "I love you" in as many different ways as possible, never mentioning the war; some posed as heroes, others as cowards. Everybody was afraid of what the future--any time 1 second from NOW -- held in store.

July 24

A year ago today we were still straining at the leash. The regimental commander paid us a visit and told us that we would jump off tomorrow. My company was to do the attacking and was to be supported by fire from the other two companies. Your husband became a very busy man. There were many details to be worked. In addition to my own company to make plans for, I had to coordinate my artillery, mortar, and heavy machine gun support. Normally, this would be done by the battalion commander and issued to me along with the attack order. But-----

That evening I sent out a patrol led by S/ Sgt. Hollingsworth. He was a new man whom I had received as a replacement about a week and a half earlier. After his first engagement I promoted him from private to staff-sergeant right on the spot. He had enough guts for six ordinary men. During the next few days he was to make quite a name for himself. Stars and Stripes called him the "One Man Army."

He led the patrol out deep into that portion of the enemy lines



that we were to attack. On his return he reported an earth and log pill-box commanding our avenue of approach, a mortar position, two tanks, three machine gun positions, and strings of booby trapped Teller Mines along the hedge-rows. All of this I reported and the report was ignored. We found out later that everything reported was there.

At any rate, we got all set for the attack. Late that evening we were told that the attack was postponed.

July 25

A year ago today we finally learned the reason why we had held up in position for so long. The big attack that was to result in the allied breakthrough, jumped off. For six hours the sky was darkened by wave after wave of bombers and their escorts. Anyone who saw that sight will never forget it. The sound of the motors alone shook the earth. As they unleashed their bombs the ground under our feet reverberated with their crashing explosions. It seemed impossible that anything could live in the area to the south of us. Initially, the attack was very heavy. As we watched, some of the planes burst into flame and plunged earthward, others fell out of the formation and headed home trailing clouds of smoke. But the casualties were very few. It was, indeed, an awe-inspiring sight.

The bombing was not for us. We still had a well dug-in enemy out in front of us that had to be dislodged. That attack was definitely set for tomorrow.

Do you remember my telling you about the attack that my company launched on July 12th which we refer to as "The Turkey Shoot?" Today, I looked up some statistics on that attack. We had less than sixty men in the company when we staged the attack. Our casualties were two killed and six wounded. During the battle we took 28 prisoners and after the battle the G R O picked up 78 dead Germans. That's why we call it "The Turkey Shoot".

July 26

A year ago today we once again jumped off in the offensive. The plan was changed a little from the original, but G company was still to do the brunt of the fighting. We pushed off at day light with two platoons abreast in the attacking echelon and one back in reserve.



Immediately after crossing the L D the right platoon was stopped. Fortunately, we had committed only one squad, so were not too involved. From the report brought back by the patrol that I had sent out the day before, I had anticipated that the right platoon would run into trouble, so had an alternate plan to put into effect immediately.

The left platoon was making good progress so I pushed the reserve platoon in behind them and pulled the right platoon back into reserve. The original reserve platoon followed the left platoon for about 3 or 400 yards and then I committed them at right angles to the direction of attack in order to protect our right flank and to knock out the resistance that had stopped the right platoon.

The left platoon continued to make good progress but I finally had to hold them up short of the objective because the 1st platoon, the one making the right angle attack, ran into a hornet's nest. Their first attack was stopped cold. I moved them slightly to the left and tried again, but with no success. We reorganized and stormed the position for the third time. This time we drove the Jerries out of their holes and had them on the run. Just as we were about to congratulate ourselves on our success, two monstrous Tiger tanks appeared on the scene. The retreating Jerries rallied about the tanks and in short order retook the ground they had lost and we were right back where we had started from.

I believe that I told you about Sgt. Holland ( I think, though, that I called him Hollingsworth) whom the Stars and Stripes called "The One Man Army." He led the assault on the enemy position that finally routed them. He rushed up to a hedge-row looked over the top of it and saw an enemy machine gun nest right below him. Instead of tossing a hand-grenade into it like any sensible man would do, he pulled the pin on the grenade, laid it on the top of the hedge-row, flicked it with his hand, and let it roll down into the machine gun position.

When the Germans withdrew he jumped up on top of the hedge-row in order to pursue them with fire. He was standing there when the two tanks appeared on the scene. One of the tigers singled him out and moved toward him, but he held his ground. Standing on top of the hedge-row he started to fire on the tank trying to shoot through the vision slits. When the tank was about 40 yds. from him they opened fire with their



cannon. The first round tore out the hedge-row under his feet and turned him a flip in the air. He jumped up, shaken but unhurt, ran 20 yards to the left and once again climbed back up on the hedge-row. The tank again fired its 88 mm gun at him and again knocked him off the hedgerow. This time he was pretty well shaken up and withdrew to the next hedgerow.

Possibly this feat does not impress you too much. Anyone who has seen a German Tiger Tank--60 tons of steel that even our bazooka won't penetrate--with its 16 feet of 88 sticking out like a long snout will know that S/Sgt. Holland got in line for seconds when grit and guts were issued. I've seen almost an entire battalion turn tail and run down the road not at the sight of a tank but merely because some one screamed that he heard a tank.

I asked Sgt. Holland why he courted disaster like that. In a slow, country drawl he replied, "Sir, I don't have a thing waiting for me at home except a model T Ford, and the block's busted on that."

All this action had taken place in less than four hours. It was now about 0830. We were ordered to hold up until B Company moved up on our right and then make preparations for a night attack.

I spent the rest of the day making my preparations. I asked for and received three flame throwers. In addition I requested that all artillery in the Corps be put at my disposal 20 minutes before I intended to jump off. Normally, Corps Serenades are not fired closer than 800 yards to friendly troops; I wanted it within 300 yards. It took much arguing on my part to get that. Finally, we were ready and darkness jumped at us.

At H-15 the artillery started. One battalion in the Corps fired short. I had anticipated this and had warned all of the men to stay in their foxholes until the artillery lifted. In order to check the artillery I was standing on top of the hedge-row above my foxhole. One of the short rounds burst in a tree about 30 feet above me, but fortunately I was unscathed.

The company on my right had disregarded my admonition to remain in their fox-holes during the artillery preparation. Instead they had crawled half way to the next hedge-row so as to be able to close in more quickly when the artillery lifted. They were caught out in the



open by the rounds from the battalion firing short and suffered so many casualties that they were unable to make the attack.

We jumped off. The Jerries had pulled back one hedge-row and had left the one that they were originally in heavily mined with booby trapped Tellermines (tank mines) connected by trip wires. Some of my men hit these and were blown to bits. The next day I found the body of oneman scattered in a radius of 50 yards. Part of his body and one arm were in a tree about 50 feet off the ground.

Our attack failed once again. We spent the remainder of the night retrieving our wounded and trying to grab an hour or so of much needed sleep. It had been a very rough day.

July 27

A year ago today we awoke from a night spent in "licking our wounds" with the realization that we still had a job to finish. The first report that I received from my sentries was that they had heard the sound of motors moving away from us. This could mean that the enemy had withdrawn so I sent a patrol out to check.

The patrol, led by Sgt. Mulholland, worked around to the left and encountered a group of about five Jerries. The Germans started to run but Mulholland stopped them with a well-placed A T rifle grenade. He killed two of them, wounded another, and the rest surrendered. The prisoners reported that their entire outfit had withdrawn during the night. We checked their statements with further patrols and found them to be true. The position that we had first tried to crack a week and a half before was now evacuated. We moved in, outposted the place, and awaited further orders.

It was no wonder that we had been unable to dislodge them. I checked the position very closely that day and found it to be the strongest that I had ever seen. In every field there were at least four machine gun positions dug under the hedge-row and reinforced with about a four foot thickness of logs and earth that would stop even a direct hit from light artillery. The machine guns were fixed to cover every possible approach to the position. The guns were fixed so that they could be fired by a string attached to the trigger and running back to the dig out. About 20 yards out in front of the hedge-row was a row of anti-tank Teller-mines which could be exploded by a



string running from the mine back to a dug-out. Out in front of this on the next hedge-row were the booby-trapped Teller mines that we had hit the night before. Routes of approach had been cut for the tanks through the hedge-rows and positions dug for them in the defense area. It was quite an elaborate defense system and cost us pretty heavily.

To our front was a broad swamp that extended as far as you could see to the right and left. It was the same type of terrain that had proved so costly to us on the 4th of July. About noon the battalion was ordered to make preparations to cross the swamp on order.

I took Hamm with me and went down to the edge of the swamp to make my reconnaissance. As we were standing there, a patrol from E. Co. started across to feel out the other side. Hamm talked me into joining the patrol and going with them---sooner we went.

We received a couple of rounds of artillery on the way over, but no small arms fire. Except for a few scattered groups the enemy had completely pulled out.

As we reached the far side of the swamp, Hamm, who was about 20 yards behind me, excitedly called for me to come back and see what he had found. He had his foot caught in a wire that was obviously a trip wire. I slipped his foot back slowly so as not to take up any more slack and then traced the wire down. At one end it was tied to a stake driven into the ground and at the other end was a big, nasty looking Teller Mine. Had the wire been a little tighter or had his foot gone a half an inch farther forward, our reconnaissance would have ended rather disastrously. I had, without knowing it at the time, stepped over the wire. We searched the area and found two more similarly rigged mines blocking the approach at that point. Working very carefully we cleared a path for the battalion through the mine field and marked it.

With that, we moved back across the swamp and I assembled the company for the move. Shortly thereafter, we moved out.

It was becoming rather obvious that we had lost contact with the enemy. We marched all that night trying to regain contact. I was given the job of leading the battalion. The battalion C.O. made a pencil mark on my map and told me to lead them there. This sounds



easy but proved to be one of my most difficult jobs. I couldn't send out a patrol or scouts to the front for the route was very circuitous and they couldn't have found the way in the darkness. In addition to that, it was very necessary that we regain contact with the enemy as expeditiously as possible. Taking Hamm with me I moved out ahead of the battalion acting in the dual capacity of guide and lead scout. In the pitch darkness it would have been very easy to take the wrong turn someplace and never know it. To offset this, I would move forward 500 yds. by counting my paces, stop, and check my map. In order to read the map, I had to use my flashlight. Each time that I turned it on I expected to be fired on.

About mid-night we came to a blowed-up town by the name of Marschellieux. I had been told that our division reconnaissance troop had already taken the town. After wandering around the debris for about a half an hour trying to find the right road out of the town, an M-8 scout car poked its nose into the village. The Recon. Troop had just arrived. I was so damned mad at the false information that had been given me that I decided to smoke the cigarette that I had been wanting so badly. I lit it and dared any body, friend or foe, to shoot at it.

Just as we were moving out of town, some Heinie planes came over and dropped flares above us. The countryside was lit up as though it were day time. What an eerie picture it made with the flashes of artillery off to the flanks, the skeleton of a town silhouetted to our rear, and ??? out in our front. We froze in our tracks and the planes droned away. Evidently, they were only taking pictures. We moved out again and by daylight I had hit the objective squarely on the nose. I was very proud of my night's work.

July 28

As I told you yesterday, we had fought most of the preceding night and had hiked all night last night. We reached our objective at day break and started to dig in. When my slit trench was about half finished, a messenger brought word that I was to report back to the battalion C.P. Back I went to discover that we were to move out again within the next hour. There was to be no rest for the weary.

I returned to the company, ate breakfast, and issued my order to



the platoon leaders. Shortly, thereafter, we moved out with F co. in the lead. I turned my company over to Macaluso and went forward with F company so as to keep abreast of the situation in case something broke.

That day we had a cub plane from the Division Artillery working with us. The pilot flew ahead of the column looking for Germans. Whenever he spotted any, he flew back to us, cut his motor, glided down, and screamed out to us their location. The system worked beautifully. We captured a few prisoners that day but met very little resistance.

About noon, my company was detached from the column and sent out to the left flank. We reached our objective without serious mishap, captured a few prisoners, and dug-in. Just as we had finished digging our defensive positions, the General arrived on the scene and gave us a new objective a few miles away. We were off again.

I remember very little of that hike for I was dead on my feet for lack of sleep. The last two nights had been completely sleepless for me. I do remember going through a town with a German graveyard on the outskirts of it. The newness of the graves made me very happy. Also, in the town were the first open air street latrines that I had ever seen. I had heard of them but had never really believed until now. The rest of the march hangs in my memory like a dream.

Late that afternoon we were attacked by ~~some~~ Heinie planes. I sounded the alarm and the company dispersed. My own feet wouldn't move. I stood fascinated in the road watching the planes strafing us. The machine-guns kicked up dirt all around me but I was untouched. It is impossible for me to explain my actions for even at the time I didn't know why I remained standing there. Fortunately, two P-47's appeared on the scene, knocked down one of the planes, and drove the others off.

Shortly thereafter, we reached our objective. Within my company area was a group of three or four houses. One of my noncoms arranged for me to sleep in one of them. This was the first real contact that we had ever had with French civilians. They were still frightened from the Germans who had been there the night before, but when they discovered that we were Americans, they treated us like kings. I stayed with the family of M. Roger--you probably remember my writing to you about them and how well they treated me.

That night I slept in a real bed between sheets--the first time



since I had left the States. It was a wonderful night.

July 29

A year ago today I was at the home of M. Roger--the French family about whom I've already told you. I felt much better after a good night's sleep. After checking the company over thoroughly, I settled down to getting as much rest as possible.

We still hadn't regained contact with the enemy. For the first time in 33 days we were out of artillery range. However, we didn't know it at the time for we still didn't know where the Germans were. We picked up a few stragglers in our area but that was all. By the time that we knew there were no enemy about us, it was time to move out again. Nevertheless, we did get some much needed rest.

We didn't know it then but the Allied breakthrough was in progress. Within a couple of days the roads became glutted with our tank columns. The sight brought tears of thanksgiving to the eyes of we doughboys.

Even the long hike that we had just finished made us happy. We would have walked like that forever. Every hedge-row that we walked by was one that we wouldn't have to fight for. In those two days we covered more ground than we had covered during the preceding month. We've had some rough times since then but the fighting has never compared with that done in the Normandy hedge-rows. Every yd. was bitterly contested.

July 30

A year ago today was spent in rest and recuperation. The news of the breakthrough started leaking back to us. Our joy at the news was unbounded. Fortunately, we didn't have the means of looking into the future and seeing the months of bitter fighting that still lay ahead.

July 31

A year ago today we were still resting and revelling in the good news about the breakthrough. I located a shower point that the engineers had set up and took a bath. The water was cold but I enjoyed the shower none the less. This was the first real bath I'd had since leaving England almost seven weeks before. The shower was being run by one of my classmates, Vernon Sanders, so we held a little reunion.



The French family with whom I was staying continued to treat me as though I were visiting royalty. I had taken them to Church with me yesterday. This was the first time that they had been able to attend Mass for quite awhile, so they were very happy and grateful.

Aug. 1

A year ago today I went back to the regimental C.P. for an officer's meeting--the general wanted to talk to us. He made the statement that the reason our casualties had been so high was because the company officers were not planning their attacks. To prove his point he was going to call on an officer picked at random--"Well the C.O. of Co. "G" please rise? --What was your plan in assaulting hedge-rows?" I'm afraid that he regretted his choice, for about ten minutes later when I had finished explaining "Plan M," about which I have told you, he blinked, cleared his throat, and changed the subject.

Also, a year ago today was the last time that I saw Ferdy. We had a drink together after the meeting and he explained to me the trouble that he was in. His explanation was very satisfactory as far as I was concerned.

Aug 2

A year ago today we were alerted to move on a moments' notice. We knew that we were going to mop up some of the places by-passed by the armor on the breakthrough, but we didn't know just where we were going. The rest had done us good but we all figured that it would take us about 20 more years of doing nothing, but eating and sleeping to really recuperate.

Aug. 3

A year ago today we were bombed by some German planes. The bombs landed in the rear areas and did very little damage other than to scare hell out of some of the characters around the regimental C.P. We shot two of the planes down so that made us all very happy.

Also, I was awarded my first Bronze Star. Of the four men decorated, three of them were from "G" Co. Larry was the fourth. These were the first decorations given out so we were all very proud. I learned later that Col. Faber had recommended me for two Silver Stars, but upon his death, subsequent administrations had cut the award down to the Bronze Star which I received. But---I'm still plenty proud of

it.

Aug. 4

A year ago today we said good-bye to the Normandy hedge-rows. Loading on to trucks, we followed in the wake of the armor that had made the breakthrough and moved over to the St. Malo peninsula in Brittany. On the trip we passed through Periers, which had been our initial objective 1 month ago to the day, and Coutances. Both towns were badly battered. Nothing remained but a heap of rubble.

Aug 5

A year ago today we were back in the fighting zone. We moved out in the approach march formation toward the sea at the end of the St. Malo peninsula. We felt our way slowly meeting some occasional resistance.

The French people who lined the roads fed us cider and deluged us with flowers. For the first time since we had been in combat we felt like conquering heroes. It was a new and grand experience after the arduosity of the hedge-rows.

Late in the afternoon I sent Joe Macaluso out on a motorized patrol to contact the first battalion who were attacking toward Concale. Joe's jeep driver, T/5 Wiedener, was shot through the heart by a sniper. Joe rushed him back to the aid station but he died while the Doc and I were working on him.

I spent the night in a ditch along side a small side road.

Aug 6

A year ago today we moved out early in the morning to continue our attack toward the sea. At one point where we stopped for a short while I heard a baby crying. We were not close to any houses at the time so it was rather a strange sound to hear amidst artillery and small arms fire. I listened closely and soon heard it again. Moving in the direction of the sound I parted the bushes and there, huddled together in a deep ditch, were about 50 French civilians. I learned that they had taken refuge there about three days before to escape the Germans.

About that time our breakfast caught up with us. I told the cooks to give what was left over to the civilians. I guess the men weren't very hungry that morning for they all insisted on taking only about 1/3 of what they normally ate. When it came time to move out I had



quite a job getting the babies and kids away from the soldiers and back to their mothers. I snowed hell out of a little six month's old boy. I was the only one that could get him to stop bawling. It cost me my last clean handkerchief to use as a diaper on him, but I dood it.

That night I slept in a dug-out that the Germans had been kind enough to dig for me.

Aug. 7

A year ago today was made famous by " F " company's bayonet charge led by Captain Mitchel. The attack was supported by two platoons of heavy machine guns firing from second story house windows in the town of Le Gue, about 3 Km from St. Malo. Under cover of a smoke screen laid down by the 81 MM mortar platoon, a few men crept forward with bangalore torpedoes and blew gaps in the barbed wire in front of the position. Immediately after that, Bob led his company up the hill, through the gaps, and into the position. The attack developed so expeditiously that the Jerries were overpowered before they knew what had hit them. We were finally able to make contact with Mitch on the radio, but the only thing we could get out of him was " J-- C--~~X~~ come on up/ There's loot enough for every body." With that, he signed off and went back to drinking the champagne that he had captured.

At the time of the attack I was out on a patrol trying to find a covered route for my company leading into the rear of the enemy position. The success of his attack made my reconnaissance unnecessary.

Aug 8.

A year ago today my company launched an attack from the town of Le Gue toward the town of St. Ideuc, which is a suburb of St. Malo, We hit a strong point just outside of Le Gue and after a short fight knocked it out. From there we continued the attack and progressed about another 800 yards when the attack bogged down. I moved over to the right flank of the company and found one of my squad leaders, Jim Tripodes, had his men in the wrong place. I raised much hell with him and had just started to crawl away when an enemy machine-gun opened up on us. About 5 slugs tore through Jim but, as usual, I wasn't hit. Trip was evacuated to the States.

Joe Macaluso and I crawled out to a house about 100 yards in front

of our lines and used it as an O.P. From there we could count 8 artillery pieces, two machine guns, and a mortar O.P. About 75 yards to our left front were three Germans sitting with their backs to us and less than 50 yds. to our right front was a trench full of Heinies. I cautioned Joe not to give away our position by shooting because I wanted to use it as an O.P. However, the sight of the three Jerries sitting with their backs toward us infuriated me. About every 15 minutes I'd line one up in my sights. Just as I would be about to squeeze off a shot, Joe would catch me. He reminded me that we still wanted to use the position as an O.P. At least two of those three Jerries owe their life to the fact that we needed an O.P., for I know that I could have gotten at least two of them before they could have taken cover.

It would have been suicide for the company to attack across the open terrain to the front so I had the men hold up. Joe and I fired all of the artillery in the corps on the positions that we could spot out to the front. We wreaked much havoc on the Heinies.

Late that afternoon we were ordered to withdraw and follow the 3rd bn. who had broken through the defenses over to our left about a mile and were now fighting in St. Malo. A daylight withdrawal is a pretty ticklish situation especially when you're as vulnerable as we were. I brought four tanks up and with them we forced the Germans in the trench to surrender. Then, under cover of fire from the tanks, we started our withdrawal. We suffered a few casualties from artillery fire--Holland, the "one man Army" was wounded and Lt. Witherspoon was killed--but luck was with us.

Just outside of St. Malo, Larry and I were standing in the road talking things over when an enemy tank spotted us. He let one fly and it landed about 10 feet from us. Fortunately, it was a dud.

We started into town and one of my jeeps was blown up by a mine. We did a little house to house fighting in St. Malo and then holed up for the night.

Aug. 9

A year ago today we continued the clearing out of St. Malo. It was quite an experience to be fighting right in the midst of civilians. There were hundreds and hundreds of them still in town. At times I



had a little difficulty keeping the minds of the men on their fighting. The French people --especially the young girls--were very happy at being liberated.

We cleared the place out house by house and took many prisoners.

Hamm disappeared for about half a day and when he returned he had two beautiful horses complete with saddles. It wasn't until some hours later that I learned that he had gone out ahead of the outpost line and killed the two Germans that had been riding the horses. He was so engrossed in showing me the good points of his two prizes that he neglected to mention that incidental episode. He and I made our rounds on the horses that day. We had our pictures taken by a news reel photographer but didn't stop to give him our names. Within the next few days, Hamm provided the following transportation for us--- a fire engine, two automobiles, a motor-bike, and a motor-cycle.

Aug 10

This day, a year ago, was filled with wonder for us. After having fought and lived in the hedge-rows for so long, it was almost enjoyable to be fighting in a large town. During the day we methodically cleaned out building after building and at night we had a roof over our head. We found a store that had been operated by the Germans. That's where all of us got the scarves that we started wearing. After awhile the wearing of a bright scarf became so prevalent that a man looked undressed without one. We continued to wear them until the war was over. It was a sad day for all when the order came down that scarves would no longer be worn.

It was a year ago today that I had my picture taken while talking to a German officer P W and his wife, who was posing as a red cross girl. That was the picture that appeared in Stars and Stripes.

Aug. 11

A year ago today we were still mopping up around St. Malo. A squad of my men captured two self-propelled 88mm A T guns on the edge of the town. I think that they were the ones that were firing at us on our way into town when Larry and I had the near miss with the dud.

Aug. 12

A year ago today was one of the most exciting days of my life. My company was ordered to attack a very strong position just outside the town of St. Malo. I dreaded the ordeal for it amounted to charg-



ing across flat open ground into a network of reinforced concrete and steel underground tunnels and positions. It seemed impossible to take the place without an enormous amount of casualties.

As I was moving the company around into position, a German non-com came out of the fortress bearing a white flag. He could speak a little English and I soon made out that he wanted to see an American doctor. Feeling medicinally inclined at the time I told him that I would return with him. I asked Shultz, one of my men who spoke German, if he would go with me. He said that he would so I told Hamm, my body guard, that he wouldn't have to go. At that statement he first became very angry, then started pleading with me, and finally started crying and saying that I always took him with me except when I was going into something very dangerous. At that I told him to come along and he immediately became as happy as a kid with a new toy.

I had Hamm and Shultz remove their weapons, for we were travelling under a white flag, and emptied all identification from my pockets. I retained my own pistol--just in case. Before starting out, I warned my two men to be over impressive with their military courtesy. They were to snap to attention if I even so much as looked in their direction. This, more than anything else, always impresses the German.

At one of the many entrances to the position we were blind-folded and led through the passages of the fortress. Finally we stopped, the blind-fold was removed, and the fortress commander and I stood face to face.

We introduced ourselves very formally--he spoke English--and then I proceeded to give him hell for putting me, a Captain, to so much trouble--he was only a lieutenant. This approach snowed him under--thank heavens he couldn't hear my knees knocking together. He apologized very profusely saying that his position as commandant of such a large fortress gave him the equivalent authority of a Captain. Not wishing to push my luck too far I accepted his explanation.

Then followed a battle of wits for he had no intentions of surrendering. For over two hours we debated back and forth in the best Hollywood manner until I finally talked him into giving up to me.---Of all the German officers I have ever seen, he impressed me most of all.

With the capitulation of this fortress we launched our attack



anew. About two thousand yards later, after taking about three intermediate positions, we hit another concrete pill-box. I brought up a platoon of tanks, had them fire on it, and then went forward to demand their surrender. They did so without argument.

What a glorious day it had been/ We had advanced over two thousand yards, killed a number of Jerries, taken over 400 prisoners, and hadn't suffered a single casualty ourselves. I was very, very happy about the whole affair. That night I slept in the pill-box.

Aug 13

A year ago today we received orders to break contact with the enemy and move back into an assembly area. This difficult maneuver was executed without mishap. Once in the assembly area we loaded on trucks to move around the bay to the vicinity of Dinard, which is directly across the bay from St. Malo. We completed our move that afternoon and took up an extensive defense position for the night.

For the first time we received a bombardment from the German rocket known as the " Screaming Mimie" It's an enormous shell that makes an eerie screeching sound as it comes through the air. German propaganda said that it killed everything within a two mile radius when it exploded. That proved to be an out and out lie for a number of them landed in my company area and no one was hurt.---We captured a number of them on our drive to the Rhine last spring and fired a few back at the Germans.

Aug. 14

We spent the day a year ago edging our way forward in the direction of St. Briac. Early in the afternoon we halted in the vicinity of a large, knocked out German airport. Word came down that we would be there for quite some time. As we were in the midst of settling down an order came through directing us to move about four miles to a forward assemble area from which we would launch an attack the following morning. Off we went again.

I was given a goose egg on the map in which I was to move my company. We closed into the area late in the evening and I went out on a reconnaissance. Just before dark we got the company moved into the area. Then, things started to happen. German soldiers started wandering into the area. Before midnight we had collected over a

hundred prisoners. It proved to be quite a job handling them in the dark but I don't believe that any got away. We finally got settled down for the night.

Aug 16

I'll give you the events that took place a year ago yesterday. Early in the morning we launched our attack. My company was on the right of the battalion with the mission of by-passing the main part of the town of St. Briac and driving to the sea about 4000 yards away. We had to clear out a couple of towns on the way. I lost two more officers doing this. One of them Lt. Frank, was killed by one of our own artillery rounds that fell short. Lt. Killain was severely wounded by an exploding mine in an AP mine field that the Jerries had sown.

We pushed forward to the edge of the little town and then I called a halt. In front of us was a flat, open piece of terrain that sloped down to the ocean about 1500 yards away. The field was covered with mines and barbed wire. Commanding the entire lay out was the most stupendous fortress I have ever seen. It was a large hill, right on the ocean, of solid rock. The Germans had hollowed it out and constructed within it a complete fortress. It contained seven floors, an elevator, disappearing coastal guns, a power plant, and every thing else necessary to fighting. They must have spent over a million dollars on the job. On the sides were torpedoes suspended by cables ready to be let loose on any one who tried to scale the thing. This was Hill 48 and the objective of my company.

Seeing what confronted us I held the company up, called for an air mission to be flown on the target, fired all of the artillery in the corps on it, and moved a platoon of tanks into position where they could fire direct fire at it.

For about four hours we pounded it with no apparent effect. Then all at once I saw a white flag appear out of the top of the hill. We learned later that by an act of God one of our shells had gone through an air ventilator and exploded in the power plant. This caused the place to be filled with carbon monoxide gas making it untenable. But for that, it would have taken us many days and many lives to take the objective.

I notified battalion of the surrender flag and the Colonel told



me to go forward to receive the surrender. It took me quite a while to clear a path through the mines and barbed wire but I finally made it. We took about 600 prisoners and there were about 300 dead ones inside that had been killed by the gas. We also found a phone inside that was in direct connection with Hitler's office.

There's much more to the story but it's all so colorful that I'll wait until I can actually tell it to you in person to do it justice.

Late that afternoon the Colonel called me in and talked me into giving up my company and becoming S-3. So ends my career as a company commander. From now on I shall tell you from time to time the things of interest that happened but I won't try to give you a day by day account. I hope that you have found my little story interesting. At least it will give you an idea as to what we were up against during those first few hectic weeks of combat. I doubt if there has ever been any fighting that was more fierce than those weeks in Britany and Normandy.