

The 82nd Airborne Division in Normandy

Footnotes are the comments of my grandfather Bill Giegold[1], 82nd Airborne Division, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fox Company

Command structure:
Commander: Major General Matthew B. Ridgway (transferred and Gavin took over)
Adjoint: Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin and Brig. Gen. George Howell

Chiefs: Col. Ralph Eaton (wounded June 6th), Col. Ed Raff (June 8-15), Lt. Col. Bob Wienecke

G1 Lt. Col. Fred Schellhammer
G2 Lt. Col. Jack Whitfield
G3 Lt. Col. Bob Wienecke
G3: Lt. Col. Walt Winton
G3 Lt. Col. Henry Adams
G4 Lt. Col. Ben Zinn (wounded June 7th)
G4 Lt. Col. Frank Mormann
In charge of:
Communications: Capt. Bob Furman
Health: Lt. Col. Wolcott Etienne (wounded June 6th)
QG: Maj. Don Faith
Chaplain: Col. George Riddle
Civil Affairs: Capt. Peter Shouvaloff

505th: Col. Will Ekman
507th: Col. Geo. Millet (captured June 8th)
507th: Col. Art Maloney
507th: Col. Ed Raff (wounded June 7th)
508th: Col. Roy Lindquist
325th gliders: Col. Harry Lewis

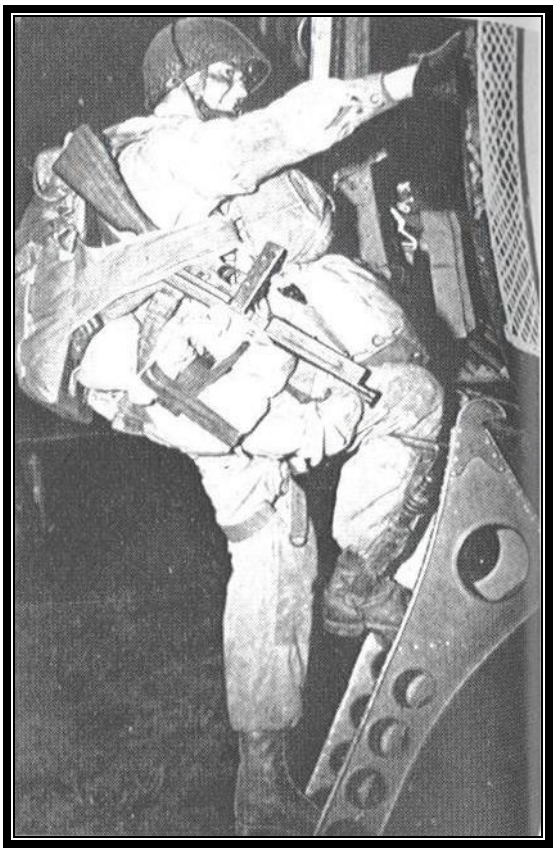
82nd Artillery: Col. Francis March

[1] Bill's website: http://jump.to/giegold

319th glider art: Lt. Col. James Todd
320th glider art: Lt. Col. Paul Wright
456th paratroop art: Lt. Col. Wagner d'Allessio
80th Bat AT and DCA: Lt. Col. Ray Singleton
307th para eng: Lt. Col. Bob Palmer (captured June 6th)
307th med. Officer: Maj. Will Houston (KIA June 6th), then Maj. Jerry Belden
82nd QG officer: Capt. Geo. Claussen
82nd Radio Officer: Lt. Bob Nerf
82nd Recon Platoon: Lt. Joe Demasi
82nd MP: Maj. Fred Collum
82nd Supply Officer: Capt. Jim Griffin



This shoulder patch was worn by each member of the 82nd Airborne, and stood for their nickname "The All-Americans." Since the patch was noticeable above other things, the French used this to identify paratroopers of the 82nd.



Combat ready paratrooper boarding C-47



Ready to jump!
Notice static line attached to cable. Paratroopers jumped from a heighth of 350-600 feet, of which 72 feet were required for the chute to open. The static line activated the chute as the paratroopers jumped out the door.

Marie-T Lavielle
Village of Pretot (near Picauville) on the Manche (the sleeve-like peninsula of Normandy, France)

June 6, 1944 at 6 a.m.

In the heart of the Cotentin region on an isolated farm occupied by my family, I awoke abruptly.

What was happening? I was under the impression that the wall that my bed was against trembled and resounded. Then I heard some voices in the kitchen.

Quickly I got up and discovered an unusual scene. A man – quite bizarre – was seated in a chair in the middle of the room. He wore sort of a khaki uniform, very soft and flexible, with pockets throughout.

On his head, he wore a helmet covered with leaves, while his face was camouflaged in black. He spoke using words that I could not understand. My mother and brothers surrounded him, and were trying to guess what he was saying.

His left hand seemed to support his arm. Without ceasing, he repeated *broken, broken*.

Suddenly, releasing his arm, he pulled out a knife that was contained in a sheath on his lower leg. He then cut a strip from a roll of bandage that had been in a pocket in his pants. And, most wonderfully, he pulled out a chocolate bar that he gave to us.

This man, quite strange, was, thus, our friend.

Broken – this first English word remains burned into my memory.

This paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne Division was lost in the country of Normandy, on this morning, and had a broken shoulder. One of my brothers drove him to a place where he was cared for.

As for me, I was 9 years old, - and because of this extraordinary experience, I became an English professor, often serving as an interpreter during ceremonies of the Anniversary of D-Day.

Marie – T Lavielle (April 5th, 2001 at age 66)

Bridgeheads around La Haye-du-Puits (la hay dew pwee)

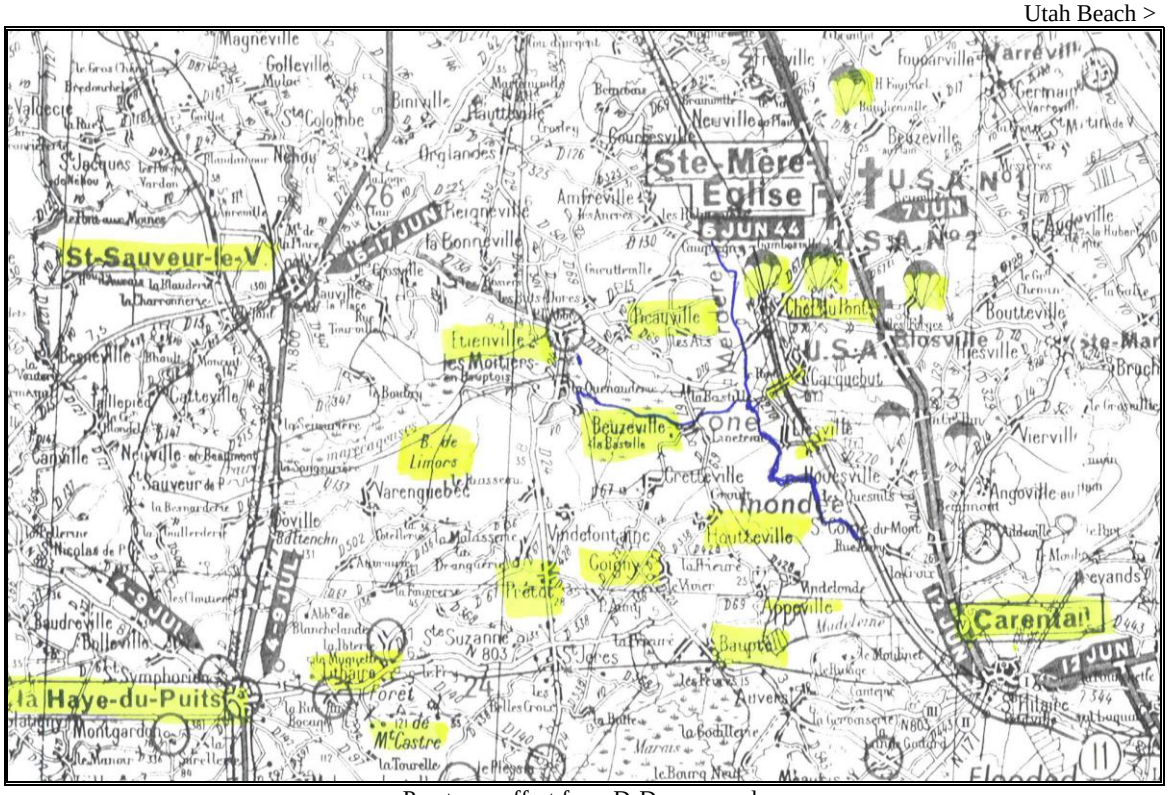
The objectives of the day I attained, but there were other tasks awaiting the 82nd AB Div.[2] Capturing the bridgeheads concerned us, since these were crossings for our offensive forces. The 82nd launched three attacks in these areas: Baupte-Coigny (bohpt-coin-ee), St. Sauveur le Vicomte (sew ver le vee kompt) and La Haye du Puits (la hay dew pwee). Participating in the isolation of the peninsula by joining up with the 101st AB to speed up Bradley's getting out of the marshlands was the goal pursued by the Major General Ridgway's (commander, 82nd AB) men. The 82nd AB paratroopers advanced to just south of Picauville (pick-oh-veel).

[2] 82nd AB Division – Major General Matthew Ridgway (Westpoint grad, later transferred)
then came General James "slim Jim" Gavin. Ridgway took over another outfit; Gavin took over.
508th Parachute Infantry Regiment – Colonel Roy Linquist (West Point grad and called Bill by his first name; later became a one star general)

- 1st Battalion – Major Warren
  - A(ble) Company
  - B(aker) Company
  - C(harlie) Company
- 2nd Battalion – Lt. Col. John B. Shanley
  - D(og) Company
  - E(asy) Company
  - F(ox) Company – Lt. Goodale, Lt. Lloyd Pollette (both KIA)
- 3rd Battalion – Lt. Colonel Mendez
  - G(eorge) Company
  - H(ow Company)
  - I(tem) Company
  - (A platoon consisted of 1/3rd of a company- about 20 men)

Also Headquarters and Supply companies

Utah Beach >



Paratroop effort from D-Day onward

The crossing of the Douve River at Beuzeville la Bastille on June 13th

During the evening of June 11th, Roy Lindquist, commanding the 508th parachute infantry regiment, reorganized the group while on Hill 30, and found out that the fellows of the 90th Infantry were pinned down at Pont l'Abbe. This was reported by Lt.Col.Tom Shanley. After hearing this, our ears began to heat up. They certainly didn't like to have the Krauts at their back shooting down on them. "Grab a boat under the cover of night, you're going to the bridge at Beuzeville-la-Bastille!" [3]

The small boat capsized in the marsh, and the patrol unsuccessfully tried to flip it back over. At midnite on June 12, Lt. Goodale at the head of Fox company, after some violent artillery attacks made by the 319th, 320th, and 188th artillery units, the 307th battalion of engineers put together a footbridge for pedestrians which crossed a large bomb crater that had split the road. Footbridge was completed at 8:30.

[3] Bill Giegold crossed at midnite. The boat had wooden sides and a tin bottom. They then destroyed some tanks. One went over a bank and burned. A pontoon Bailey Bridge then allowed C company to cross.

Lt. Goodale[4] destroyed two tanks and neutralized all resistance at Beuzeville la Bastille; after about five hours, the entire regiment was on the southern banks of the Douve River marching to new objectives. *[Bill Giegold was here]*[5]

Major Warren of the 1st battalion of the 508th won the town of Coigny with the help of Lt. Colonel Mendez[6] of the 3rd battalion of the 508th who acted as a shield at Taillefer on the right flank. The principal role of the 2nd battalion of the 508th under the direction of Lt. Colonel Shanley was to secure the southern area of Baupte to join up with the 101st AB Div.

12 Tanks destroyed around Coigny!

Leaving Beauzeville la Bastille, the 1st battalion of Major Warren progressed toward Coigny. At about 8am, the platoon of Lt. Weaver made known two tanks at Cretteville cret-veel), which were then destroyed. Shortly afterwards, five Renault tanks suddenly came from the castle of Francquetot (frahn-k-toe) which were of the 100th Panzer battalion. Around 6pm, Major Warren seized Coigny (coin-ee), sending out patrols, and organizing his positions. To protect his unprotected left flank, Warren quickly sent Captain Jonathan Adams with two companies and an anti-tank gun to la Hogue at the crossroads of the Vierge (vee-air-j). Waiting in ambush, Capt. Adams and his men got five tanks, but lost the command tank who managed to escape.

On June 13th, the 1st battalion of Major Warren added to the hunt a total of twelve tanks in twelve hours of combat. (Bill Giegold was involved with the tank hunt) This number was never exceeded by any other paratroop unit. Where, therefore, was the infantry who was supposed to protect the German tanks? The answer is, without doubt, brought about by the 3rd battalion of Lt. Colonel Mendez who captured some snipers.[7] The prisoners said that more than 100 snipers were dispatched to the front under order to shoot paratroopers until out of ammunition. Among the prisoners it was noticed that the tank

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[4] Lt. Goodale (Bill Giegold's platoon commander), commanding Fox company, was hit on July 3rd along with Eddy Chitoyen. Goodale was in a hospital in England, and then was sent to the Battle of the Bulge. Here, Goodale was killed by a German while sitting on a log. I believe the German held a prisoner upon approach, and used him as a shield. Bill Giegold was once standing by Lt. Goodale in a French garden when Goodale shot unarmed Germans trying to return via the railroad. He captured many and put them in a garage, and a cook threw in a grenade. Captain Flanders was taken prisoner on d-day. During truck transport he was killed by strafing by one of our planes. Frank Mckee was laying in a ditch, and Bill Giegold made the medics pick him up via a drawn 45. This saved Mckee's life, and everytime Mckee calls Bill, he says "thanks for saving my life."

[5] Bill slept in a graveyard at Baupte by order of Goodale. He and a second lieutenant, which was later killed on Hill 95, jumped over a hedgerow and saw two German medics. The second Lt.'s false teeth fell out because he was gritting his teeth so hard. Ray Bolzier (his brother was an actor) ordered Bill Giegold to mount the rear of a tank, and then Lt. Goodale ordered him off to avoid being killed. Roy was then shot.

[6] Col. Mendez was an Inca Indian. After the war he married and had 10 kids. He progressed to be a one star general.

[7] Chipman (Wisconsin) , Montgomery (Illinois), and Giegold were crawling along a hedgerow when German snipers got both guys, but couldn't get Bill because of a tree branch. There were also mercenary artillery units of Mongolians using horse drawn equipment.

crews wore black uniforms; the majority of the prisoners said that they were not German. The officers had deserted the front, leaving the sergeants without provisions. They were out of ammo. Briefly, everyone said the same thing; some were Polish, but all had a terrible fear of American artillery.

During the afternoon, the 3rd battalion of the 508th under Lt. Col. Mendez took defensive positions between Pont-Auny (pone-t-on-ee) and Hotot (hoe-toe). Colonel Lindquist was at Taillefer (tie-luh-fair)[8]. The enemy made his front at the line of Sablons-Pretot (sob-low-pray-toe), where we were face to face with the enemy for quite some time.

I hit a tank full of fight!

With the second battalion of the 508th, I had embarked to go to Cottesmore (coats-more) and we flew around Normandy when above the Cotentin (coat-ten-ta) the flak exploded. We were in a barrage of flak, says Eddie Wenzel. My plane was hit by the exploding flak, and I received some in my right leg, which traversed through a box of rations and my pant leg, but I didn't realize it at the moment.



C-47 "Dakota/Gooney Bird/Skytrain"

At the signal of the green light, the C-47[9] bounced, and we had a bit of sickness while jumping out the door. My parachute opened very close to the ground. I was above two German machine gunners, and then landed in an orchard[10]. At the last moment, I tried to avoid landing in a tree so not to be suspended helplessly in my harness. Then I found myself hitting the ground quite roughly, which gave me a backache.

The Germans were all around me. I waited, without moving, until finally I was found by two buddies. It was difficult to orient ourselves to the surroundings, and we knew we

[8] Where is Taillefer? – it isn't on the maps
[9] The C-47's flew at 350-600ft, and the chute took 72ft to open
[10] Bill Geigold's (paratrooper) C-47 was fatally hit and was falling backwards out of the sky. He stood headed for the door, and slid down the aluminum floor, going out the door. He landed in an orchard south of Baupte. Found a kid "Oburn" stuck in a tree and helped him out. Oburn was then shot by two Germans at a later point. Bill was south of Baupte on the west side of the Douve River. Baupte was on the east side.

were far from the specified dropzone (DZ). We avoided the Germans, and headed towards Hill 30 where Shanley was. I had a 1903 Springfield rifle and an anti-tank grenade launcher[11], and a good supply of explosives in my pockets, not to mention our standard equipment. It was enough to impose respect!



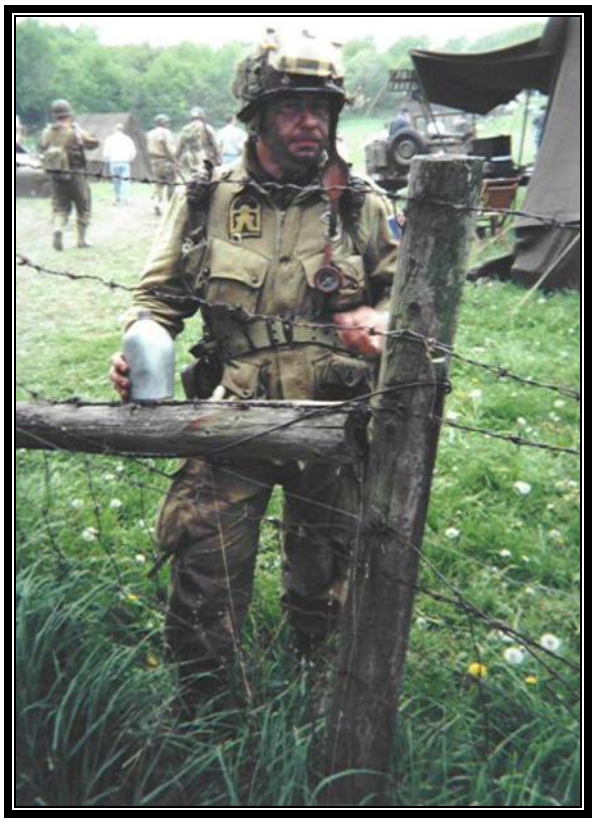
US Soldier (technician)

On June 13th, with my platoon, I was one of the guys about to attack Beuzeville and Baupte, advancing with my Springfield rifle. Everything went well to begin with, except that my back was killing me. In a small descent, I saw some magnificent horses and I wanted to pet them. "Tanks!" someone yelled. In returning to the road, I shot at the tank. The tank was hit and this aroused furiosity, followed by a bunch of Germans who got out and began to fight. At this moment another tank showed up on the road; the Germans were running and shooting. In the fight, I received a bullet from a German hidden in the hedgerow. When I opened my eyes while under a bush, I gave myself a shot of morphine for the pain, and then two medics hauled me away on a jeep away from Beauzeville. It was during this attack that Bill Elrich was killed. I was hospitalized and later in the Ardennes I rejoined my regiment.

[11] The 1903 Springfield was bolt action with an attachment to shoot grenades. Other guys carried a 30 caliber Garand which was semi automatic. A"lowly grease gun" looked like a grease gun and shot 38 caliber (9mm) ammo. So, could shoot German ammo. The bazooka used anti-tank round CR's; two pieces put together. It was too long to jump with by parachute. One guy carried both parts. It was heavy, and another guy had to carry the ammo.

June the 13th was one of the toughest days to befall the 2nd battalion of the 508th of Col. Shanley, with the capture of Baupte, the intersection of the roads through the marshlands. At 5am, the Fox company had cleansed Beuzeville la Bastille and rejoined the battalion preceding the Easy company to attack Houtteville. Two tanks showed up to fight the paratroopers. The guys hidden in the ditch threw some Gammon grenades under the tank tracks, disabling them. All 14 Germans were killed. While moving the dead Germans off of the road, a grenade fell out of one of their pockets, which scared us greatly. *[Bill Giegold thinks Charlie company went to take a small town]*

The Easy company had stopped about two kilometers from Baupte by a violent fire. Col. Shanley told the patrol that artillery and tank forces were in front of them.



"Shanley was an Irish boxer, and had the mind of a nuclear physicist"
-General James M. Gavin

At 4pm, the attack began after a shooting barrage. The Dog company put pressure on from the North while Fox company made a move to the right, cleaning the southern half of a village, which entailed an hour of shooting. The Easy company then followed Fox company to penetrate the village to the northeast.

This time the resistance collapsed, but the Germans fought with determination. The paratroopers discovered that they had uncovered the 100th Panzer battalion, including 10 tanks, 50 cars and trucks, and a fuel depot.



The Battle

In addition, to the south, the Fox company would not rest until finding and taking four big DCA guns hidden on railroad track. *[Bill Giegold says they used explosives to blow up the railroad and guns]*

By the evening Col. Shanley had control of Baupte and the surrounding areas. The bridges to the east were destroyed by order and a blockade was held by D company of the 508th covering the road to d'Auvers. *[towards Carentan]*

At midnite, the paratroopers of Major Warren (1st battalion) dug in near to Launay (low-nay), just to the west of Baupte (boe-pt) next to the sector which appeared menacing. Because of the isolation, a counter attack by the enemy could be fatal.

Lot of paratroopers! Stay with us!

It was the cry of the Germans on June 6th, recalls Mr. Goubert (goo-bear), mayor of Baupte. All the French citizens of Baupte had found refuge in the nearby village of Frene (friend w/o the d) by the swamp. The big DCA machine guns shot all night at the C-47's dropping paratroopers. Debris fell all around Baupte. The Germans said, "Stay in your homes! Lots of paratroopers!"



The Krauts

A small group of Americans hid on the Lamberton farm. A Lieutenant paratrooper and his men were killed by the Germans. Five survivors took the captive path, while the other paratroops who were pursued by the Germans took another stand at Appeville.

"Bad misfortune! Maybe our hour has come!" said the German officer at Coigny when he arrived and saw the blood-covered body of the American Lieutenant paratrooper.

Baupte was liberated on June 13th, where a German tank commander had ordered all of his forces (100 men, 8 tanks, and some work trucks) to respond to the American attack there. He faced no hope in his defense, because, at that date, the town of Baupte was a definite target of the Americans.

Enclosed in his tank, the German tank commander gave 20 francs to a native for a bottle of cider. Then he engaged in battle in the marshes, in which his tank got stuck, and then was burned. In retaliation, the Germans blew up the railroad bridges at St. Jores (jore).

The Germans lost here and became prisoners, a full company minus 37 fatalities. Two tanks were burned in the slaughter.

Despite the fighting, each person managed to eat and offer his services to the others. And in accordance with that on June 13th, cabbage leaves were given to the rabbits in the farm buildings!

During the calm, I was quickly going to pick some good cabbage leaves to distribute at the farm building. Arriving at the farm building, I discovered German prisoners sitting on the straw guarded by some paratroopers.

In seeing me, the Germans open their eyes as big as billiard balls. Already, they regretted the failure of the German war-machine. The paratroopers laughed over this.

Paratroopers pleased to steal German truck!

During the attack on Baupte, we progressed north to a wide open field; both companies were in lines. Suddenly to the extreme left of the field, a rabbit (German soldier) fired on us. This was followed by an assault to the right flank of the company lines. A small rabbit was ridiculing the men of Col. Shanley. With continual combat tension, we had an immense need to relax.

At Baupte, the capture of a truck of the 100th Panzer division made paratroopers quite content, especially for those who couldn't walk. "Ok guys, lets head for Paris!" somebody said. Unfortunately the trip wasn't very long.



German halftrack truck

On the evening of the 13th, the front left Baupte, Frene, Hotot, the crossroads of Vierge (vee-air-j), Pont Auny (pone-t-ah-knee), Taillefer (tie luh fair), with a light bend at Francquetot (frahnk-toe). Major Warren was with his men near to Prieure (pree-uhr).

The paratroopers in front of Coigny

On June 13th with two machine gun vehicles and a GMC truck, the paratroopers were guided by a Frenchman to strike a blow in the direction of St. Jorerie to help the other paratroopers, explained Mr. Levesque of Coigny (coin-y).

On this date, the air support fellows did some bombing on the St. Jores road on the way to Margaleuse (mar-gah-luz). The double fuselage chasers (P-38's) rocked and pivoted like swallows on one wing, their guns opening fire on churned up ground. After bombing, the planes would emerge from a cloud of fire, smoke, and explosions. Dead bodies filled the fields around Margaleuse, as well as Renault tanks. This company, by orders of Major Nicholas who had his CP[12] at Francquetot (Frank-toe), left to aid the fellows near St. Jores and Periers. The survivors were stranded at Baupte.

On the morning of June 13th, after passing the night in a trench underneath artillery fire, there were paratroopers everywhere. During the night, a German patrol killed a paratrooper in the door of the farm building where I was. Following from June 13 to July 3rd, the front remained stationary while fighting went on north of presqu'ile (presk eel). The paratroopers continued to rebuild their lines along St. Jores, the first line being near la Judee, which is where I received a volley of shots from Germans while taking milk to the paratroopers. As you can imagine, they really liked the milk. *[Bill Giegold got milk from the farmers, and he really loved it]*

On the morning of July 3rd, the 508th division rested for the well-being of the paratroopers. Jeeps, Dodge's, half-tracks, and Sherman's kept going past for many days. It was a preparation for a big attack on Mount Castre (Hill 122). We saw a lot of tanks going through the hedgerows.

[12] command post

During the following days the fellows had to undergo several alerts and to hold and consolidate their positions in spite of their small numbers. July 14th at 7:30am, an attack came from Pretot (pray toe) which hit the positions at Pont-Auny (po-tah-knee – the last syllable is pronounced and connected to a vowel, otherwise they don't say the last syllable of a word) and the mortars of the 81st made some big holes. On July 15th the alert was given for the morning; the artillery of the 319th pounded for 15 minutes. At about 10:30am, Major Warren ordered a response to counteract the fierce resistance at Pont Auny. At 4pm, all actions halted; the enemy was weakening. On the evening of July 15th, Col. Lindquist established a PC (communications post) of the 508th at the castle of Francquetot (frahnk-toe), near his three battalions. Only D company stayed at Baupte (boe-pt) near a destroyed bridge.

I am very bothered to see two generals climbing up the tree!

During June 15th, I was on observation with my binoculars in the bell-tower at Baupte, reported Zane Schlemmer[13]. I saw a big group of 50-60 German bicyclists[14] on the road. Pedaling in the fresh morning air, they began to spin out to the right under our fire. The shooting barrage got all the Germans on the road in a mass of tangled up bicycles. What an elimination of heines (high-knees) at one time. Two were captured. Nine remained stretched out, laying down on the road, and the rest tried to escape. This bicycle formation came from Tribehou to reinforce the forward German posts of Baupte who, for two days, were already taken by the paratroopers. This sudden event made an ending of action for that regiment, which was shortly relieved by the arriving 507th regiment.

Zane Schlemmer was at the Pont-Auny (poe-tah-knee) front, and I was climbing in a tree to observe and regulate the firing of mortars of the 81st. At this moment, an 88 shell passed over us; the bad thing about this was that powder then covered everything including my binoculars, coming from the nose of that famous gun.

[13] Mr. Zane Schlemmer, known by Bill Giegold, is a Hawaiian and was an 81mm mortar man. He made his name well-known in Nijmegen, Holland where he was the only mortar man available, and eradicated 300 heines. When called, he came leading a cow carrying the equipment.

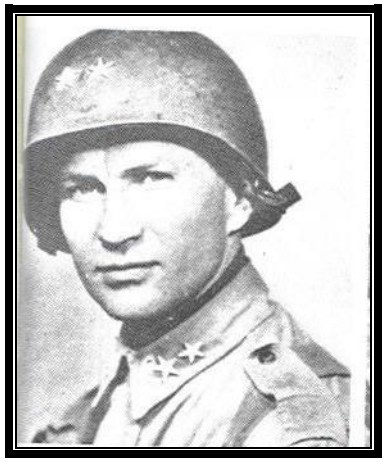
[14] These 50-60 Germans on the bicycles were machine gunners. Bill Giegold was on the other side of town with a machine gunner named Elash. Bill threw a gammon grenade on a Renault tank followed by a phosphorus grenade. This got the tank, but one man escaped in the smoke, which Elash got. Elash had just cleaned his machine gun and had put one bullet in for testing, and here came the heine.



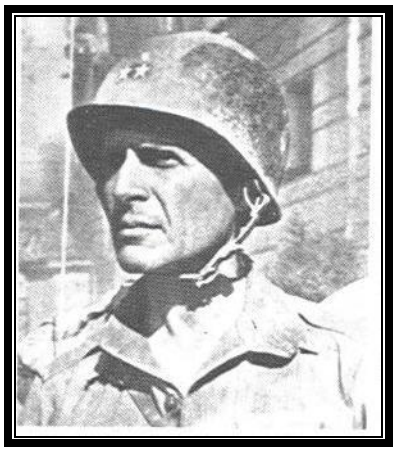
Zane Schlemmer, ornery cuss

Suddenly there was noise below me, and I saw two generals climbing up the tree under the fire of the 88's. I peered through the branches to see that it was Gen. Ridgway and Gen. Gavin; I was nervously seated between two generals in my tree, under the fire of the 88's!!!

General Ridgway asked me what I was doing, and I told him that I was observing. He said to direct our mortars onto the presumed location of the 88's. At the moment that he said these words, three 88 shells whistled through the top of my tree at such a terrifying speed that both generals rapidly descended from the tree, to continue visiting our positions.



Gen. James M. "Slim Jim" Gavin



Gen. Matthew B. "Big Matt" Ridgway

We were very proud of our officers who were always with us on the front lines with the fellas. After a short stop in Etienville to rest the division, the 508th of Lindquist was ordered to march to St. Sauveur le Vicomte (saint so-ver le vee kamt) to take a bridge on

the Douve (doov like move – means castle moat or drainage ditch) River and to take some defensive positions to the south of the village.

June 16th, Ridgway captures St. Sauveur le Vicomte

[Bill Giegold involved here, also James Gavin]
According to Collin's orders, the 82nd had to also exercise their effort to the west in the slicing of the enemy's forces to isolate the peninsula. The 82nd had been assigned to clear a corridor between the 90th and the Douve River; that is to say the axis that runs through Pont l'Abbe and St. Sauveur le Vicomte.

After the taking of Picauville (pick-oh-veel) on June 10th by the 358th RI (Infantry Regiment) of Col. James Thompson, the next day brought the junction with the parachutists of Shanley, which had been isolated on Hill 30. The 90th, then, renewed its attacking effort, but was stopped at Pont l'Abbe, where the enemy stubbornly fought to defend one of its principal routes to the center of presqu'ile (presk-eel). Finally, on the evening of June 12th, after two days of bombardment and aerial attack that left many craters, the town of Pont l'Abbe was liberated. General Omar Bradley was furious with the 90th, and he immediately relieved the commander of that division.

On June 14th, it was at the sides of the men of the 507th PIR and the 325th glider division, that General Manton Eddy attacked in the direction of St. Sauveur le Vicomte and traversed the ruins of Pont l'Abbe. On June 15th after having destroyed two tanks, they took Bonneville while the 325th glider division captured the road intersection at Rauville la Place (QG of the 91st DI [Infantry Division] of Col. Konig).



Col. Konig and soldiers

At midday of June 16th, grace to the applied force of the 746th tank battalion, three parachute regiments took the river side by St. Sauveur le Vicomte; the Germans in complete retreat blew up the bridge. Ridgway was assigned by the PC to be stationed in the castle at Rauville, and he got everyone he could to help in his project of securing the Contentin area. The goal was to get his paratroopers to the other side of the river. He

ordered two battalions to the other side of the Douve River. The 2nd battalion of the 505th crossed the river and took St. Sauveur le Vicomte, while the 1st of the 505th went beyond this village about two kilometers. In between time, the 508th, which went to Coigny, was reassembled at Etienville. The 3rd battalion of the 508th relieved the 3rd battalion of the 505th at Crosville, and at 10pm, the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 508th had penetrated the bridgehead; they took a position to the south of Crosville on the route to La Haye du Puits. The responsibility for the northern half of the bridgehead was given to the 505th, which positioned itself on higher ground 2500 meters around Crosville. The 508th was responsible for the other half. *[Bill Giegold says the 508th was to the north side and the 505th to the south, but he helped guard the southern half of the bridge]*

A Bailey Bridge across the Douve River was constructed in two hours which permitted armored equipment to pass to the west side of the river. None of the elevated artillery positions to the east of St Sauveur le Vicomte were able to pound on the retreating enemy. The first Piper Cub observation planes had no difficulty reaching the front. At 11pm the bridgehead at St. Sauveur le Vicomte was solidly taken by the paratroopers of Ridgway. *[Bill Giegold was involved in the battle of St. Sauveur le Vicomte]*

"You can tell Eddy that the road is open to him" was the comment announced on the radio from Ridgway to Collins.

This advance rapidly dispersed among Collins environment like a bomb; Collins was expecting a rash response from the enemy. Manton Eddy commanded the 9th DI (DI = infantry division) and placed double blockades, and sent, in urgence, his 47th RI (RI infantry regiment) to St. Lo d'Ourville and St. Sauveur de Pierrepont to cross the bridge of Ridgway.

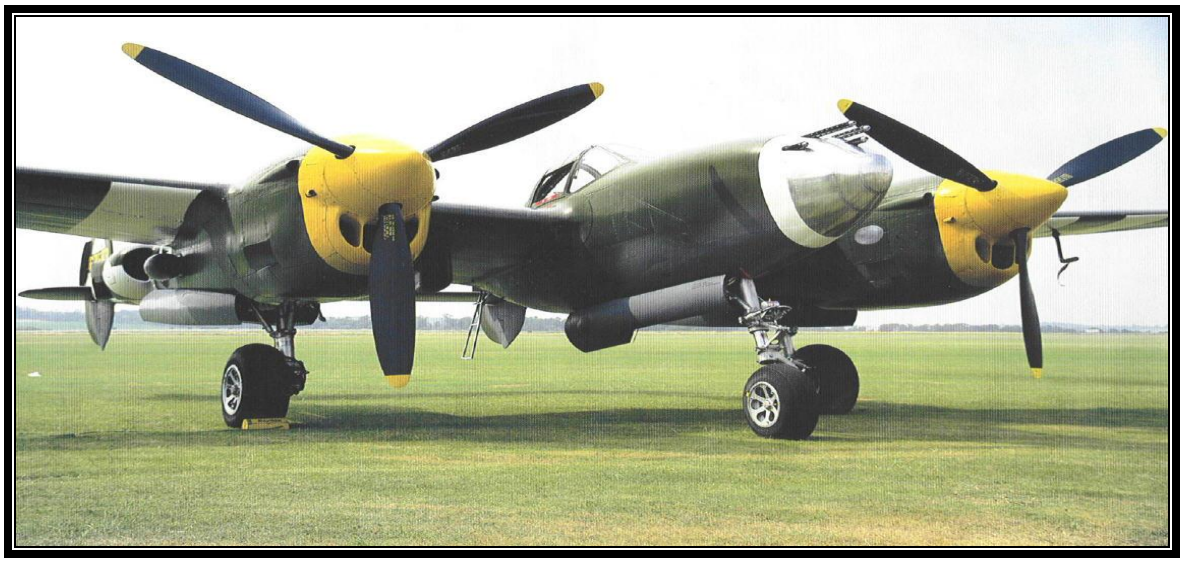
The next day included clearing and reorganizing; company C[15] of the 508th established a barricade on the La Haye du Puit road, and then blew up the bridge of the Prairie Marecageuses (the prairie marshes). Reinforcements from the 90th division arrived. In two days (June 17-18), the Cotentin (peninsula) area had been cut off from the enemy. This left some of the enemy by itself in presqu'ile. The offensive at Cherbourg opened with three divisions to take the big port located there.

Paratroopers at St. Sauveur le Vicomte

Lieutenant Fred Cappa landed in the middle of the village, and was then retrieved by Mr. Raymond Osouf who hid Fred in an attic for six days. After this time, other paratroopers arrived which he joined. Mrs. Delacotte observed dozens of paratroopers who laid dead

[15] Bill Giegold has told me of a Sergeant Funk whom he knew in C company, a guy who shot first, and asked questions later. He was real gutsy, and once upon a time left 5 paratroopers to guard 22 Krauts. Other Krauts came along and retook the situation. Leo came around the corner, told his guys to duck, and mowed all the Germans down single-handedly. Leo can be found at www.arlingtoncemetery.com/lafunk.htm on the net.

on the road to the abbey. Lt. Colonel Herbert Batcheller commanded the 1st of the 508th, and had assembled a small number of men during the night for a counter-attack. The surviving parachutists (about 20) were imprisoned in the baker's shop just west of the village. The bridge, on June 6th at 9:30am, was promptly destroyed by a group of P-38 Lightnings, which was a titanic spectacle to see.



P-38 "Lightning"
(notice dual V-12 Allisons, double fuselage, and sleek design)

At this moment, a German convoy of armored vehicles carrying men and munitions was crossing the bridge, which was blown up, landing partially in the Douve River, and also in the village. The general public was surrounded by falling debris, which put them at risk. It was a horrifying massacre. The part of the convoy not on the bridge had taken cover within a row of houses on a high point by Meloquerie (mellow-kwery).

Barred from entering St. Saveur le Vicomte, and being heavily outnumbered (this was seen by French civilian patrols), it impossible for the paratroopers to make any advancement.

Charlie and Able companies were in position on the Douve River to guard the Bailey Bridge that was mined. The others were posted around the locality were taking ineffective gunfire from the Germans. On June 17th, a Focke-Wulf 190 machine gunned our position. On June 19th, Col. Lindquist was given new orders to move to Etienville on the morning of Tuesday the 20th to pursue a new mission. [*Bill Giegold was with this group]*

A German 88 hidden in the quarry of Doville (doe-veel) fired several shots in the area of the bridge. This killed an MP, and two civilians (Miss Huet [who-aaay] and Mrs. Duvall [dewv-all]). Mr. Andres Despres (ahn-dray dez-pray), the brother to the mayor of Portbail, was severely wounded.

The exodus of the good savior of Pont l'Abbe (poe-lah-bay)

At Saint Sauveur le Vicomte, on June 12th, while a part of the community was in flames, Doctor Deleau (duh-low) evacuated the church staff and students to the chapel and farm buildings of Selsoif. The Catholic sisters stayed there for 17 days before evacuating again.

From the good savior of Picauville, while the community was being hit with incendiary bombs, Father Belloir (bell-wha), the chaplain, veteran of WWI, said "Evacuate!" "Leave!" About 400 sick folks took to the road: St. Joseph was not evacuated. But where to go!

Where to go? With our sick it was a panic, recalls Sister Marie-Louise Simon. The Germans, in great numbers and wearing camouflaged helmets, passed us on the road on their way to attack Pont l'Abbe. Our pitiful group marched past the Roland farm to Orglandes (or-glonds), and then to the Vallee (val-lay) farm. The farmers then had us rest on the straw in the farm buildings, and gave us bread, jelly, and milk. At Orglandes, a shell landed at the feet of our superior, Mother Jehan. The woman who was next to her was killed. At the Vallee farm where I was in a press (evidently a wine press), a boarding school student was killed. A large millstone, under the force of the intense shelling and burning, trembled all night long.

But where to go? After Orglandes, in full battle, we arrived at the David farm of Bourbesville (boar-bess-vil), and then walked across the fields to the church at St. Mere Eglise, which was already full of refugees. While descending upon La Fiere (fee-air), we saw Germans everywhere sitting in position in the hedgerows, but they were dead. And then we saw that there were both German and American soldiers. Airplane and glider leftovers were everywhere; all the men were burned. It was an atrocity. The soldiers looked us over to deciding who we were, while they were perched in the treetops. A young German said that we must be stretcher-bearers, but what were we going to do with 400 sick people?



Germans

The parson of St. Mere Eglise gave us some milk, and then the Americans sent us by truck to Ste Marie du Mont where we stayed for three weeks. In returning, the civil affairs group from the parsonage of Picauville gave us permission to return to Bethany. Of this community, only the walls remained, but by providence only 17 boarding school students out of 800 were killed; what a tragic week of Corpus Christi (means body of Christ, and is a festival in the Roman Catholic Church which celebrates the honor of the Eucharist on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday).

After having traversed the ruins of St. Sauveur and the Bailey bridge, we returned to Etienville, and an intense traffic of convoys. There we learned that the 3rd battalion of the 508th had crossed the Douve River!

New bridgehead at Pretot

With the profound advances through the marshes of Coigny and Pont Auny, the Germans concentrated their forces at Pont Auny, the nerve center of action, since this was the main route for tanks, and the counterattacks didn't accomplish enough. It was for this reason that a second landing was planned to the north of Vindefontaine to establish a solid bridgehead at Pretot.

While the front of Coigny and of Cretteville was at Baupte and held by the 507th, the other units of the 82nd withdrew from the bridgehead at St. Sauveur le Vicomte, and regrouped with artillery at Etienville, since this was an important place within the proximity of the bridge there. The 307th engineering division received orders to prepare footbridges and assault boats.

On the evening of June 18th, the 82nd was under the control of Middleton of the 8th Army Corps. At 11:30pm the 2nd of the 325th glider division[16] under the cover of darkness, crossed the Douve River and attacked near Clainville (clane like plane ville) and Montessy (mawn-tess-sea); a mini-assault was launched more to the west before tromping the enemy.

At 2:30am, the other battalions crossed a footbridge at Etienville (et-tee-n-ville) while the 2nd battalion of the 325th glider guys secured the bridge. At 7:30am on June 19th, the front of the 325th went from high point to high point in the marshes, and then went along the borderline of the woods of Limors (lee-more) to Dranguerie (drong-gary), which is to the west of Vindefontaine (vin-duh-fon-tane). The 3rd battalion of the 508th participated in the attack, planning to make contact with the patrol of the 507th, and was hit with a violent attack by the enemy just before Pretot (pray-toe).

At 6pm, as soon as the engineers announced the finishing of the Bailey bridge at Moitiers (mow-ott-teay), which replaced a footbridge, tanks and artillery began crossing. A convoy of trucks transported the 505th PIR to relieve those at St. Saveur le Vicomte; they regrouped in a field to the south of Moitiers. At midnite, the 507th also launched an attack to cross the bridge at Cretteville before joining up with the glider guys. Three enemy tanks were destroyed. It is to be noted that the 307th always constructed bridges and footbridges over holes and gaps along the way. At evening, a detachment was sent to keep up the chase at Etienville. The PC of the division advanced, after having been at Feirage (fay-rah-j), then Neuville (new-ville), and then crossed the Douve (douve like move) and dug in south of Clainville (clane like plane ville).

The Capture of Vindefontaine on June 19th

On the night of June 19th, the 3rd of the 508th crossed the Douve River again under the cover of darkness in assault boats. The patrol of Lt. Moss successfully arrived at Vindefontaine without making noise; the Germans were taken by surprise. The battalion started by firing upon the Germans, which started a volley of shots, and then the Americans used mortars. Many Germans were killed. Our attack was suddenly stopped to the south by a small elevated area with an overhanging area that looked down on Pretot.

[16] This was the glider division of the 82nd AB



German Panzerfaust
Nicknamed "toilet plunger"

During the attack of Vindefontaine, an elderly lady and a little girl were caught between the fronts. The lady received a bullet in the shoulder, and the little girl was trying to save her. Lt. Rex Combs, who was holding the road with his men, yelled at them to take cover because the Germans were shooting. Lt. Combs carefully slipped in, crawled down the ditch, and managed to bring the two back with him to our lines. The little girl was Miss Raymond Holle of Picauville who said, "From Cretteville, I left to search for some bread with Mrs. Coupeaux (coop-poe)." *[Bill Giegold had heard of Lt. Combs]*

The bridge was blown up, but we were able to go around it through the fields. All of the sudden the bullets were flying around us. The Germans were shooting at us. We turned around and went back. The poor Mrs. Coupeaux (coo-poe) cried out: "Oh, I have not an arm! I have not an arm!" The Germans shot at us. I saw the bullets creating sparks when they hit the road, and then got my legs stuck in communication wire. I helped support Mrs. Coupeaux as best I could until the fourway road at Asselines (az-el-een). Some paratroopers positioned in the field came to our aid. A bandage was made for Mrs. Coupeaux. We crawled in the ditches until the Sehier (suh-here) farm. I then left by jeep to the Cadot (cad-dough) barns where the military post was. The MP stopped us for a half hour at the Beauzeville (boze-veel) bridge because of the nearby fighting.

In the ten days that followed, the front remained the same, without advancement. Only the 3rd battalion of the 508th penetrated the interior of the woods at Limor and occupied new positions to the west of the woods. A large offensive was planned for June 22nd, where the 90th had received orders to take La Haye du Puits. The attack on Cherbourg would be the distraction, while a similar attack would take place some days after. Already a new unit had arrived; the 359th Regiment of the 90th Infantry Division was in temporary encampment at Crettville, ready to relieve as needed.

Pretot in the middle of battle

The front at Pretot was held by the 894th regiment of the KG, which was of the 265th DI (Infantry Division). The Germans were without transportation, and were starving; we named them "the motorists of Hitler" since they didn't even have donkeys. At the farms, the Germans took milk by the bucketfuls, and also took the horses. Never had we seen anything like this.

Mr. Louis Lefevre, who had 21 parachutists, had seen arriving at his farm 200 starving Germans. He did not have time to hide the eggs brought for the paratroopers in a big pan by the neighbors.

"Madame! You cook these eggs for my men!" said the German officer when he saw the pan of eggs. "But, sir, impossible, and us?"
"Madame! Your lazy chickens will lay more tomorrow!" replied the officer to Mrs. Lefevre. (le-fev-ruh)

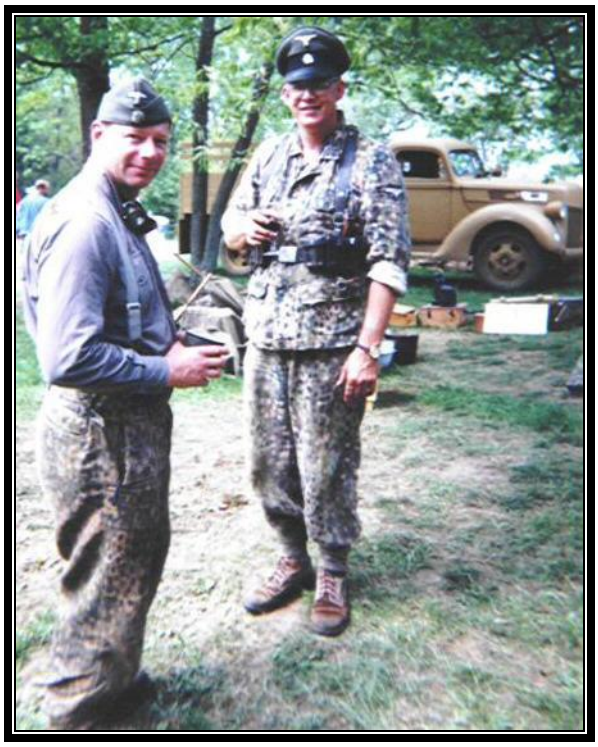
With 200 Germans and 21 American paratroopers, life was becoming very dangerous. The parachutists preferred to die of hunger, rather than to let hunger give away their presence to the Germans. In the farm building, I learned some of the names of the paratroopers: Sargent Landgraff, Lt. Karl Helge, Corporal Matheson, Sargent Rober Buynes, Sargent George Melbrose, and Private Jasper Armstrong. The others I didn't get to know.

The 200 starving Germans were on the Neufmesnil-Coigny road facing the paratroopers at Dranguerie. My farm was their infirmary, and the moaning of the wounded could be heard throughout. The chief doctor worked every day in the fresh straw at the farm building tending to the wounded Germans. He would say "Oh, mister American Eisenhower, material, material, material!"

The wounded sitting on the straw showed to the others the enormous bandages on their feet. They explained that they were shot by an American hidden in a tree. And then with his head shaking feebly and eyes shut he said "American no correct, no correct!"

Certain regrouped soldiers that had been wounded had arrived from a path in a wheelbarrow. Each night an ambulance came and took them away.

There were some SS officers that went to La Haye du Puits each day. They would return together with some good bottles of liquor. These were the ones who gave the order to the civilians to evacuate.



German officers drinking liquor

The 508th counter attack at Pretot (pray-toe)

On Tuesday June 20th, on the front at Pretot, at the time of its first attack, the 3rd battalion of the 508th was paralyzed by the artillery and mortar fire of the enemy.

Lt. Col. Mendez decided to renew his assault and went to the front line of his men. Once the village was captured, they prepared a defense.

Sgt. Major Warren Peak surveyed the Moitiers (mow-ah-tee-aay) road and saw a German truck quickly arrive with aid to retake the losses. Peak succeeded in jumping up onto the running board of the truck. At the same time, the truck, driver, and contents went up like a whirlwind into the air as it had hit a German land mine. Peak, in all the smoke, watched the truck and contents go around and around over his head. We found him in the ditch all black, just like a coal miner, with only a broken arm.

The pressure of the Germans on our little battalion was strong enough at Pretot that Lt. Col. Mendez decided to reply from 600 meters north of the village. The aggressiveness and the stubbornness of the Germans to defend Pretot explained that this village contained the road that went to St. Jores, and that was an important point to the right wing of their front. At evening, the 3rd batallion of the 508th was relieved by the 507th who launched their patrols in the direction of the woods of Limor (lee-more).

Already in planning was the grand offensive to romp the front at La Haye du Puits. The Germans had regrouped their best troops on the high points, which we perceived from a distance. And their artillery, night and day, shot harshly at our front.

On the front of St. Jores

At his farm of Sablons (saab-low), Mr. Faudemer (foe-duh-myrhh) had 30 Germans who, with an antitank gun hidden in a woodpile, held the road to Baupte (bow-p-t) against the paratroopers. They had a great fear of winged torpedoes! The front was pierced on July 3rd by the 90th. The tanks rolled in double columns coming from Coigny (coin-ee) across the fields, passing behind St. Jores, and descended on Lastelle. "My young colt was found in a field at Coigny in between tanks." My goodness, I was fortunate. I had a difficult time retrieving him. At Coigny, he was relaxed. All the Americans who passed him gave him their ration of chocolate. My colt had become their mascot."

"Suddenly one night: shouting, yelling, orders. What chaos! On the morning of July 3rd, the Americans took to the road, both soldiers and paratroopers. Suddenly one group entered my courtyard and stopped. I recognized the paratroopers who had leaves on their helmets. They stayed there two hours talking to their comrades about the current events of battles, hiding places, and the attack on the castle at Coigny where Corporal Harry Clark was killed. Then they studied their maps, and I left with them to show the way."



US Soldiers on road

At St. Jores, the Germans had constructed a barricade at the church with carts. "While the order to evacuate arrived we had left and passed a bush at bestiaux (best-ee-oh) on the border of the marsh, and then entered a farm building at Gorges where we were literally eaten by the fleas of Mongols. "

On the other side of the front, the American artillery had placed 19 cannons at Appeville (app-veel) which pounded Plessis (plessy) and the slopes of Mont Castre. The Americans drove their wounded to Poignavanterie (poyn-ah-vahn-terry). While the 90th started

attacking Mont Castre, the soldiers who returned from Cosnerie (coz-nerry) rejoiced. One of them offered his trenching tool.
"At Lithaire (lith-air), the road was blocked by barbed wire. An aerial attack bombed it. Hauptmann gave the order to evacuate Millieres (milly-air) and Pirou (peeru). My husband, who was a prisoner at Munich, said Mrs. Delelande (duh-lay-londe), heard by radio of the violent combat and that we had been freed."

The last week of June, Lt. Vincent Sheehan of the 2nd of the 508th led his patrol at night behind the front at Pretot to report all information. They also were at other places doing the same, without any losses. On the third night, they found that Lt. Sheehan was missing. One week later they found that he was fallen on the border of the road to Dauderie (dough-derry) four kilometers behind enemy lines!

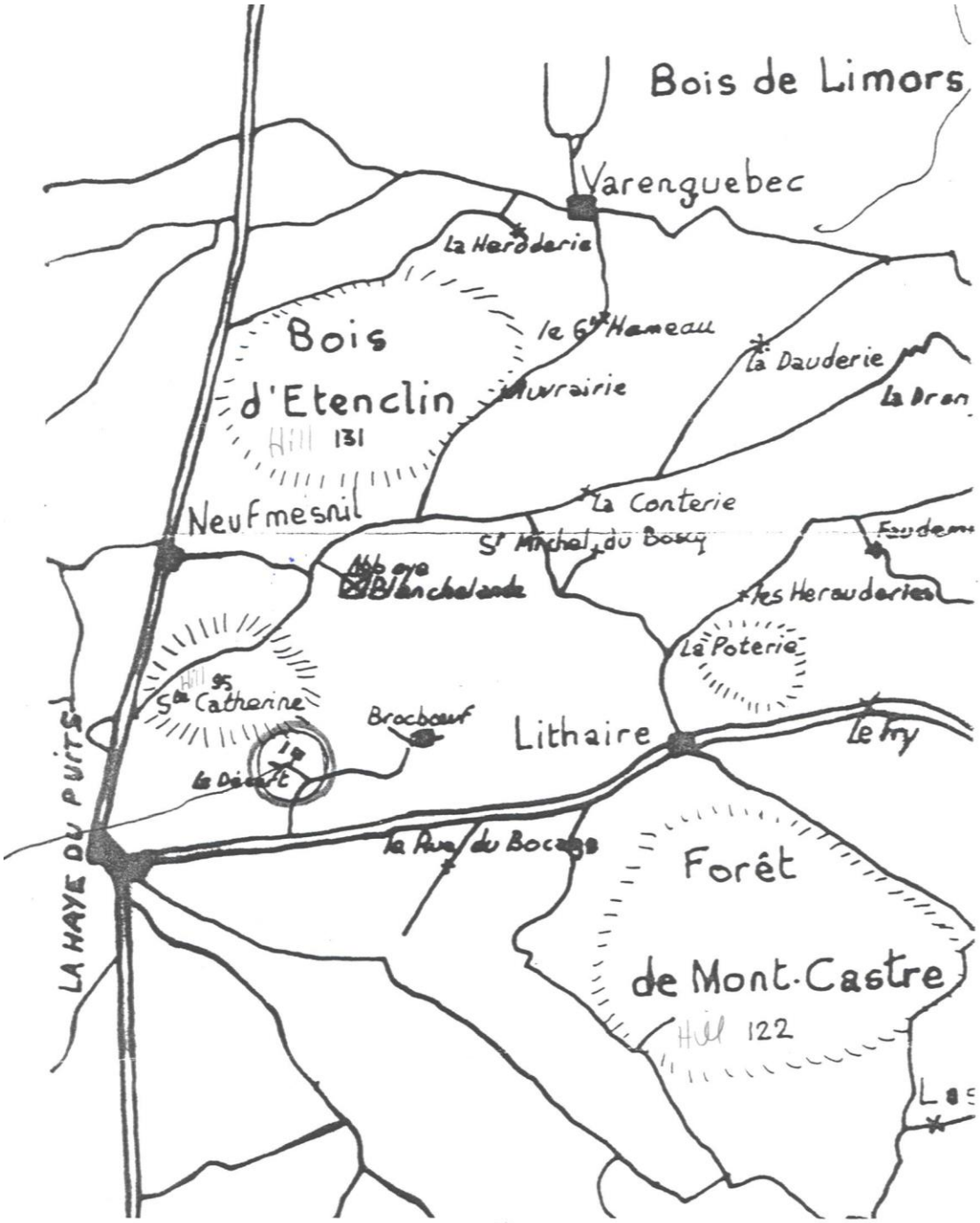
More to the north, the engineers were busy building roads through the woods of Limor.

Destruction of the artillery battery at Lithaire

What a nightmare! This famous battery poisoned the American front all the way to Baupte. Every 15 minutes we lived in waiting for another volley of artillery fire. It was demoralizing. After a strong exchange of artillery fire, the Americans decided to consult the French for aid.



German 210mm K18 Morserlafette
(notice ground plate system and gas recoil cartridges; the drive system, which elevated the unit, was operated by a vehicle via a chain drive. Required a 10-man team to operate, and replaced the 105mm becoming the backbone of German artillery)



Lithaire Battery – notice also strategic elevated defenses on Hill's 95, 122, 131, La Poterie
This made a very good German defense of roads in all directions, accomplished by Von Choltiz

I was a scout with the Americans right up to the moment that Baupte was taken, and then participated in the cleansing of the quarrys, recalls Mr. Desmet (dez-may). But the most difficult for me was to situate myself with my new regime that was quite special, and then I lived solely on battered eggs that we finally got rid of at Calvados. Naturally, I was fully aware of the danger that loomed over the front, called the famous "Lithaire Battery." It was real horror for the Americans. They were very concerned with the two

88's, which were like the devil in boxes, that came out of tunnels every 15 minutes to shoot their rounds. The situation was impossible. All of the front from Baupte to Coigny lived in throbbing fear of this confounded battery. We were constantly high-strung in waiting for the next rounds.

The officers of the command of Forfaiture (for fay tewer) wanted to finish this one. They asked me to climb a small hill. I then went up and scraped some circles in the dirt. The battery remained invisible. I offered to the officers to win Lithaire by tranquilly driving a cow on the road with a stick. When I did this, despite all my explanations, the Germans responded to me by saying: "Hey mister, this road is closed! Nicht passer! Nicht passer! Los! Los!" (what are you doing here?) They pushed on the head of the cow with their rifles and to turn the cow around. Seeing that the Germans would not let me pass, I made a 180 degree turn to go back. It was impossible to approach.

The officers decided to settle the matter. Risking damaging the map, I indicated a possible implacement. We plugged our ears. This time the 155 neighbors felt the ground shudder. Afterwards, we never spoke about the battery at Lithaire. At this moment, in a heated state, the noise shortened; the jeep drivers had the beginning of the trench cut off by cables stretched between two trees.

My boy, be careful!

At Coigny, the 3rd battalion of the 508th gained themselves a famous reputation when we learned that the mortar guys had got an airplane; something like a piper cub lost its wing and crashed into the ground.

The moral of the enemy was decreased. Tracts were placed by the enemy guns advertising desertion in several languages, also saying that the Allies would continue to pursue fighting. At the end of June, a German gun in perfect condition was discovered.

To oppose this, the Germans using "Radio Calais" broadcasted waves of propaganda which addressed the GI's as "Dirty Gertie." This was broadcasted everyday on the radio waves. "American soldiers! You fall by the thousands each day in Normandy. Return home!"

In Picauville, at the back of the front, an infirmary cared for the injured paratroops, explained Miss Rachine (rah-sheen). We always treated their wounds. When they left for the front, they would ask us to sharpen their knives. The officers crouched on the ground just like the paratroopers; there was no distinction among them in this situation.

The parents of the paratroopers sent bills and coins in their letters for the French. "My boy, be careful! The war is very dangerous" wrote one mother. "In this letter I'm sending a little money for the French civilians because we hear that they are dying of hunger.

Little by little, our storeroom filled with packages for those killed in action, and a jeep came to get them each day. Two parachutists permanently guarded the depot. They were named Brooks and Pearson. One of them was wounded in the hand, and he required assistance to eat.

The battalions in lines moved to Pretot, and Vindefontaine. During a break on Sunday, the men often thought of Father Maternowski, their chaplain who was killed by the Germans at Picauville while he was caring for the wounded. The protestant pastor, Chaplain Elder[17], had a great reputation for doing his magnificent duties in the shadows of the hedgerows. We said that he was the finest of those who worked in a religious vocation.

The offensive on La Haye du Puits[18] (July 3-5)

The St. Lo-Coutances (saint low coo-tance) road was a departing point, and this fascinated Bradley. During the last week of June, after the taking of Cherbourg and the cleansing of Presqu'ile (presk-eel), there was no doubt that the grand offensive that Bradley wanted was to launch an attack on Coutances along with the 8th Army Corps of Middleton in order to align the front with the hill of Caumont.

It was the first grand offensive to let the 1st Army Corps out of the swamps.

The 8th Army Corps occupied the front which was tightly confined between the Prairie marshes and the sea. Before them was a lot of horse drawn artillery, the main defended item being the road to La Haye du Puits. A German commander, Von Choltitz, who commanded the 84th Corps, had profitably used elevated areas to solidly establish the front. In order to cushion the shock of the offensive that Choltitz was waiting, some Russian battalions in the center over an area of about 6 kilometers held that line of security. From a birds eye point of view, the Montgardon (moan-t-gar-doe) and Mont Castre (Hill 122) hills were the anchor points of the principal line of resistance, and were lined with the best troops the Germans had, which were reinforced by the SS as needed.

To break the grip on La Haye du Puits (la hay do pwee), Middleton dispatched 3 divisions. His plan of attack entailed making an immense "V," with the tip of being towards La Haye du Puits. To the right, the 79th, which bore the insignia of "cross of Lorraine," wore halo's after having captured Fort du Roule (dew-rule) at Cherbourg, but now had Montgardon (moan-t-gar-doe) as their objective. To the left, the 90th had to take Mont Castre (Hill 122) at all costs, which was considered to be a difficult place to take.

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[17] Chaplain Elder was the only surviving chaplain. Bill Giegold knew him well. The Chaplain liked the Dachshund dogs, and got a bunch of them there. The people couldn't feed them, so they were easy to come by. He then started a kennel stateside. Bill saw him with the dogs while being on color guard for Eisenhower at Frankfurt in '45..

[18] There was a regiment (2000 men) of Germans there, and lots of arms. Bill Giegold says that Hills 131 and 95 were a bit like prairie dog shooting. The paratroops were far outnumbered. A Sgt. Cowlaw was setting up cables to get the German motorcycle dispatches. He got quite a few drivers, but had to go after the sidecar.

In the center of the V, the 82nd of Ridgway had the mission to prepare a base of attack for the 8th division, who would quickly make its way through to Coutances. Headquarters was established at Ruisseau (ru-eese-oh) to the west of Vindefontaine (vin duh fon tane), and, after the taking of Mont Etenclin (Hill 131), would move to l'Auvraire (lowv-rare). The enemy had made good use of the 11th day pause since the attack on Pretot. The enemies front had been reinforced by with traps and large numbers of mines. The enemy forces consisted of the KG 265th of the 353rd DI which assisted the Russian battalions. The SS units were held on reserve.

The taking of Mont Etenclin, 131 meters (Hill 131)[19]

Ridgway's objective in the interior of the V was to take Hill 131[20], which overlooked the woods of Etenclin (aay-tin-clah) and an ensemble of three small hills called 'the hills of Poterie' (poe-terry), which overlooked La Haye du Puits (lah-hay-dew-pwee). The first battalion of Major Warren held the front at the woods of Limor, and then were required, at 6:30am, to be prepared for the attack with the neighboring battalions, the 507th to the left along with the glider guys and the units of the 90th.

Accompanied by the barrage of artillery of the 319th, some mortars of the 81st, and from all the batteries in the area, the two battalions of the 508th went beyond the men of Warren and the borders of the woods of Limors. To the left was progressing the 507th under the command of Col. Edson D. Raff.

From the start, the German shells fell around the first wave of Americans to create panic. But the panic was overall with the adversaries in each place they were at. Near Varenguebec (vuh-ran-g-beck), the Germans suddenly found themselves in the middle of Americans. Since it rained, the Germans, in their holes under camouflaged coverings, were not aware of the attack in which American paratroopers were already at their back. The 2nd battalion of the 508th took Grand Hameau (ham-oh) and the 3rd battalion of the 508th took Dauderie (doe-derry). At 9am, German front collapsed. The 2nd battalion of the 508th of Shanley went to the right to attack a small village on the slope of Hill 131 called Heroderie (air-rode-derry). *(Bill Giegold here)*

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[19] The Germans had a radio center in a hole on top of the hill, which was blown up. Bill Giegold was the first man up the captured H131; a surrendering soldier passed him on the way down; these were mercenary soldiers being forced to fight; they gave up easily because they did not want to fight. At the base of H95, an American cook had been taking German prisoners out to a place that the Krauts were shelling every 15 minutes (an old Roman road intersection).

[20] The battle for H131 began at dawn and was taken by midday. They were not Germans, but were mercenary soldiers forced to fight that didn't want to. The Germans had underground horse stalls and radio room at Hill 95; these were hardcore German soldiers that never gave up; even after the hill was taken, Pollette had to cleanse additional strongholds. The CO commanded the taking of Hill 95 too quickly; the paratroops never completely took H95; they were relieved. At Hill 95 Col. Warren relieved Capt. Graham (F. company), who refused to mount the hill because of loss of men. Bill Giegold went directly from the meeting on Hill 30 with Shanley to Hill 131. After the victory of H131, the battle of Hill 95 took place where Bill met Phillipe Vasselin (son: Henri) who helped care for the injured paratroops on his farm. Phillipe now has a museum there with artifacts and a picture of Bill Giegold and other paratroops on the wall.

That afternoon, the advance restarted around l'Auvrairie (l-oh-v-rare-ee) and Conterie (cone-tear-ee). At 7pm, the 2nd battalion of the 508th took defensive positions near the woods of St. Michel du boscq, which faced Blanchelande. To its left, the 3rd battalion of the 508th dug in at the small village of Poterie (poe tear ee), just at the entry of Lithaire (lith-air).

Some blocks of resistance were met throughout the rear. This deep penetration to the interior of the German front demonstrated that the disorganized enemy had lost much of its bite.



Krauts in retreat

To the right, the 505, near to the marsh of Sensuriere (sawn-sue-ree-air) being guided by a Frenchman, quietly went around Mount Etenclin (aay-ten-klah [Hill 131]). The paratroopers, by surprise, penetrated between the first Russian guard gates. At 9am, the 505 had cleansed half of the hill, and had captured 146 Germans. At 2pm the road to Neufmesnil (nuf –mez-neel) at Sensuriere was in our hands. To the left, in a line even with Dranguerie Le Fry (drong-gary-le-free) , the 325th glider guys encountered a considerable number of small arms and mortars. At 4pm, they were at Faudemer (foe-demmer) making an ample harvest of German prisoners. But alas, the adventurous men in a minefield protected the principle resistance of Mont Castre (Hill 122). At Dranguerie Le Fry, a Sherman tank rolled over a mine. The other tanks progressed in a ditch, but were stopped when they sank in a marsh next to a railroad track. The men then found controlled, overwhelming rounds of shots coming from Mont Castre (Hill 122). Col. Lewis ordered a stop until nightfall to avoid casualties. At midnite, the glider guys advanced two kilometers and stopped at the foot of the Poterie (poe-terry) hill.

Those of the 508th mounted the attack in the smoke

On July 3rd, we were huddled in the bottom of a cellar with two Germans who left their guns at the door. These men of the 508th were hidden around the village of Heroderie

(hair-row-derry) laying in wait for the Germans. Suddenly, recalls Mr. Eugene Eliard (eh-lee-are), a big paratrooper of two meters (6ft) tall arrived on the double, fired some rounds, and captured the two Germans. He seized the two small guns by the big gun, which broke the hold on the road. This had taken 30 seconds. Then the paratroopers arrived and offered us cigarettes. At noon, the artillery opened fire on Mt. Etenclin (Hill 131). The hill, the bushes, the trees: everything burned. Those of the 508th mounted the attack in the smoke. On top, there was a observatory guarded by Russians. Ten Germans were killed in the village in which there was a Feldwebel who had some magnificent boxes.

St. Michel du Boscq (saint- me-shell- do- bosk) was the 508th relief station

We had here many "Georgiens" (Western Russians) framed by Germans of the SS. The mail was distributed on the front by a fellow of the SS who had only one arm.

All the paratroopers who were involved with the attack on Poterie said that it was a rough time. On the slopes, it was hand to hand combat with use of blades on the gun barrels. A German was found dead attached to his machine gun.



A German's belongings

The farm at Boscq was the relief post where the wounded arrived on foot, and by stretcher. The ambulances took the wounded to near Picauville (pick-oh-veel). In the woods of Limor, conflicts between the paratroopers and the SS often occurred.

Mister evacuate! If not we will shoot you immediately!

At Varenguebec (vahr-n-guh-bec), the Germans were given the order to evacuate to Roncey (ron-say). Mr. Raymond Eliard (eh-lee-are) left alone to cross the marsh until Selsoif where the paratroopers led folks to their PC at St. Sauveur le Vicomte (saint sow ver le vee kompt). Mr. Joseph Fauvel (foe-vel), who returned from the American front, was stopped by the Germans who menaced him at gunpoint. At La Conterie, the

Germans said: "Mister evacuate, if not you'll be considered independent resistance, and we will shoot you on the spot!" Naturally, there were, throughout, Mongolians who, in convoys, were transporting mines and barbed wire. They consolidated their front to try and hinder the advance of the Americans.

The taking of the hills of Poterie

On July 4th, Independence Day, General Eisenhower and Bradley made an inspection visit to Fosse in receiving the QG of the 79th.

For us the attack was to follow. The 505 to the right covered our flank at Neurmesnil (nare-mez-neel). Hill 95[21] with St. Catherine was the objective. The Lt. Col. Shanley had been wounded[22] yesterday at Mt. Etenclin (ee-ten-clin [Hill 131]), as was also Lt. Col. Alexander. Capt. Chester Graham was at the head of the 2nd battalion of the 508th. The regiment in its entirety didn't quite contain 1000 men. On the terrain, there was only mud, mire, and sludge. The units spread out and took different roads and paths. Shots were continually fired from Poterie (poe-tear-ee).

At Blanchelande (blah-sh-uh-lond), the Germans profited during the night by reinforcing themselves. Our barrage of artillery churned over too much too soon on the left flank; the Germans had already rebuilt so that they could unleash a fiery hell on the paratroopers. Only the 2nd battalion of Capt. Graham launched an attack on Hill 95; the other battalions were nailed down in place. Under the artillery fire, Graham with Fox Company to the right, and Dog Company to the left (Easy was on reserve) encircled the base of Hill 95 grace to Lt. Pollete.[23] Easy Company then ascended the slope to the ridge when the Germans counter-attacked, and regained 600 meters (1800ft).[24]

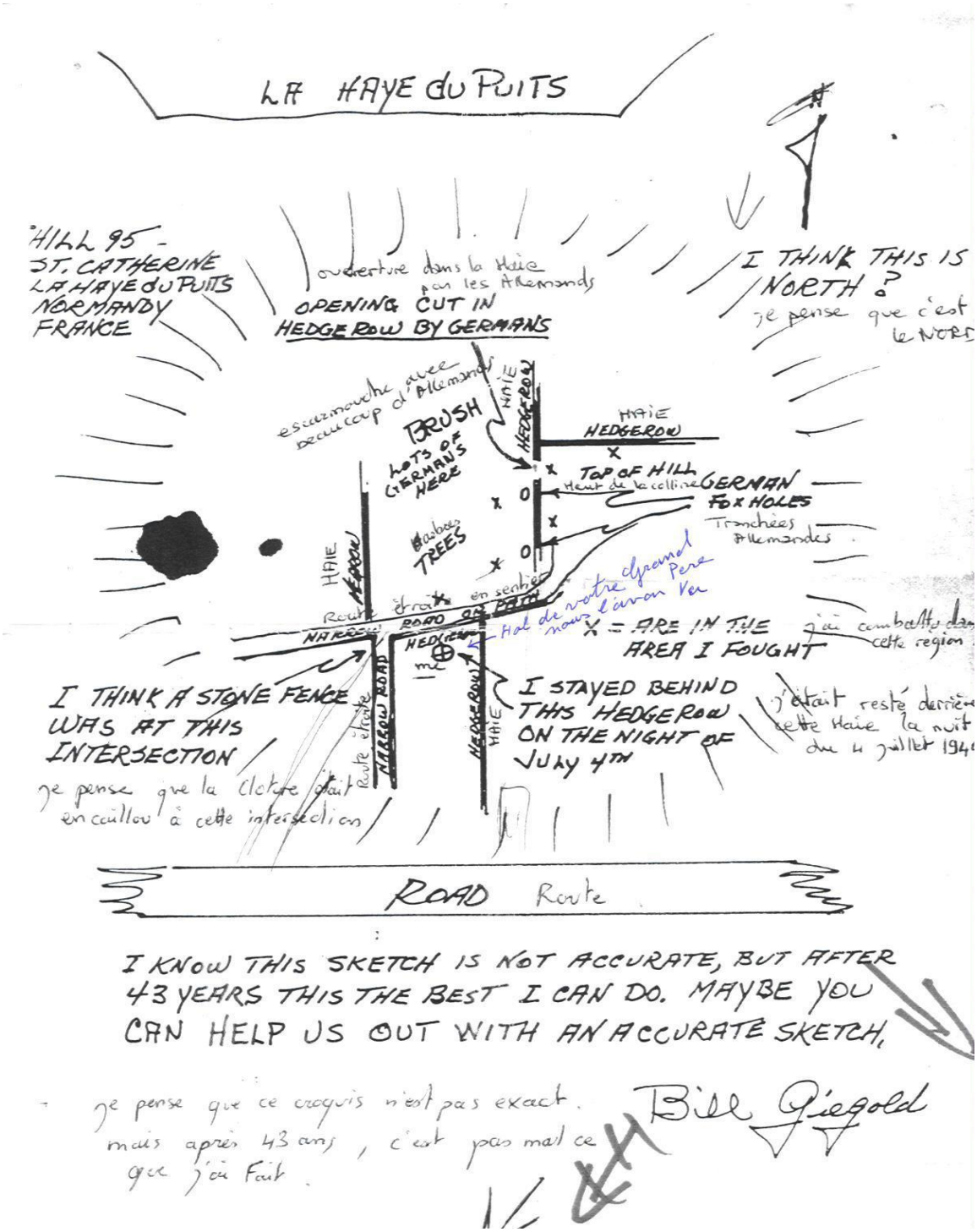
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[21] The Germans had underground horse stalls in Hill 95

[22] Shanley stepped on a mine along a hedgerow. Bill Giegold had slept in a ditch using a parachute as a blanket. After the war, Giegold and Shanley met in Fayetteville, No. Carolina at Ft. Bragg. They observed drill maneuvers of a parachuting tank and 5 guys who dropped with it, and left in the tank.

[23] Lt. Pollete was transferred form E company to head up F company which had continually lost its leaders. Lt. Pollete became good friends with Bill Giegold, and gave him some shrapnel which was removed from Pollete's derriere. General Gavin says that Lt. Pollette was one of the bravest officers he knew.

[24] Goodale replaced Graham, but was then injured on H95. Then Pollette took over. Goodale was killed in Battle of Bulge while sitting on a log by a German holding an American prisoner. Bill Giegold went up H95 with Goodale and Chitoyen (radio man). Some Krauts were calling out artillery and both Goodale and Eddie Chitoyen were hit by shrapnel from a shell that hit a tree. Chitoyen had broken leg and arm, and lost his left eye. The radio was blown almost off his back. Bill ran down a hedgerow and made it by a gate to escape, because he knew more artillery was coming. Joe Labuda had went on up the hill by himself, not knowing that retreat was called. He made it back down OK. Lt. Pollette would shoot first and ask questions later; he didn't like taking chances. Once there were 3 Krauts along side of 2 German trucks that appeared to be dead. Pollete approached the truck, spraying them with machine gun fire. After he passed the Krauts, the middle one raised up to shoot him, and Bill got that one since he was standing behind watching, and that is when he and Pollete became very good friends. Pollette was later killed by 7 shrapnel hits at the battle of the bulge. Pollete is buried in Shreveport, Lousiana. His brother was a fighter pilot killed in the pacific.



Map of Hill 95 as recalled by Bill Giegold 43 years later. His foxhole is marked with an X in a circle, Henri Vasselin, a Frenchman who helped the paratroops at this time has written in French translations, and changed the direction of North to down. Other than this, the map is accurate. Bill sat in his foxhole one night smoking his pipe upside down. During this time he threw a grenade to maintain the peace and quiet he was enjoying. After this the Germans set up a booby trap for him. Fortunately he saw the wire by the bocage (hedge) and avoided it, which would have otherwise blown him up. On Hill 95, Bill retrieved both a Cszek rifle of white metal, and a German Mauser. He later sent these home, both of which were 9mm and brand new.

The following letter was written by Bill Giegold concerning Hills 95, 131:

508th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT

F COMPANY ASSOCIATION

April 3, 1987

A. Wm. Giegold
R#1, Box 32, Singer Road
North Manchester, Indiana
46962

Dear Mrs. Henry & Philip Vasselin
La Haye du Puits, Normandy, France.

Your letter of February 14, 1987 was forwarded to me just recently. Apparently your letter was received originally by Jim Alderdyce of Frankenmuth, Michigan, who was not a member of F Company. He in turn sent your letter to Don Walton, Atlanta, Georgia, who was a member of F Company, but was not involved in the fighting on Hill 95. Don sent your letter to Lt. Alsman at Lawrenceville, Illinois, who was wounded before the battle of Hill 95. Lt. Alsman sent the letter to me since I was one of the very few to survive all the major battles of Europe even though I was wounded twice. I called Lt. Alsman by telephone, and he explained your letter to me and your desire to correspond with an F Company member who had fought on Hill 95.

Before the fighting of Hill 95 I fought on Hill 131 (Bois d' Etenclin. At that time I had lost all recollection as to the day or date, but I think the Hill 131 fight took place on July 3, 1944, however I could be wrong. On the afternoon of July 3rd I think we made our way to the area below Hill 95. On July 4th we made our attack on Hill 95 with about 44 men. We fought all day then held our positions during the night with the fighting resuming the following day. In all I was atop the Hill three times only to be knocked off twice. We lost several of our good men to die along with several wounded. By the time we attack the Hill for the third time we had but a few over thirty men. Many Germans occupied the Hill with heavy artillery in reserve in and around La Haye du Puits. To this day I would still like to know how many Germans occupied the area as I almost ran out of ammunition by the third attack. Originally I was a machine gunner, but the Germans hit my gun resulting in my fighting with a rifle both on Hill 131, and Hill 95. Hill 131, as I remember, was taken without casualties to the men of F Company. The Germans were reluctant to fight

#2

with many German prisoners taken on and around. If my memory serves me right a German Command Post was dug on top of the Hill. Since I fought on the Hill I was not acquainted with the areas around the base of the Hill. Lt. Pollette told me after the Hill was taken that they had found horses and saddles in a stable at the base of the Hill. Many of the prisoners taken on Hill 131 were guarded in a group at a road intersection where they were told to sit on the ground. Soon after the Germans shelled the area with heavy artillery hitting their own soldiers sitting at the intersection, resulting in killing most of them.

After leaving the Hill 131 area enroute to the base of Hill 95 I am somewhat lost as to the route I took to get to Hill 95. In studying your map I am sure I did not cross a major road, and after over 40 years I do not recall the smaller roads. At this time I was with Sgt. Chatoian and Lt. Goodale. Sgt. Chatoian was our Radio-man. On the way to Hill 95 he called Regt. Headquarters. this was fatal as the Germans triangulated our position during the radio contact with Regt. Heavy artillery came at us hitting the trees, exploding into shrapnel, and seriously wounding both Sgt. Chatoian and Lt. Goodale. I was but 3 or 4 meters from them surviving a horrible tree burst. They both appeared to be dying from multiple wounds, however they both survived after being many months in a hospital in England. Sgt. Chatoian was sent to a hospital in the United States having had 19 operations to his head and many to other parts of his body. Lt. Goodale recovered in England was sent with us to the Battle-Of-The-Buldge in Belgium where he was killed. Sgt. Chatoian lives in California many miles from here, but we do see one another each year. On July 5th below the base of Hill 95 and while we were trying to fight our way into La Haye du Puits I received four wounds in my leg, above my knee after being hit with shrapnel from a German Motar Shell. No bones were broken, the shrapnel went through the upper muscle of my leg. It did not hurt too bad so I kept on fighting until they sent word that we were to withdraw and return to England. If I remember right we quit fighting the late afternoon of July 5th. We could not get a ride to Omaha-Utah Beaches on the various Army trucks going to and from the beach. I guess we smelled too bad as at that time I had not had a bath in 40 days. My clothes or uniform was torn, bloody, and dirty along with being unshaven, and I think the truck drivers could not identify us as being Americans. In any event we walked back, which took two days as we were not in a hurry. By that time my leg become stiff and I could not walk very fast. I walked with Sgt. Colaw, who was later killed in Holland, he also had an injured leg. As we were walking along we saw a building, which appeared to be a castle surrounded with a meadow of beautiful green grass. We could see Army vehicles near the building, and decided to investigate the situation hoping to find food as we had not eaten in

two days. The Castle was occupied by Negro Troops moving in to the area. When they saw us they did not know who we were or where we came from. Our request for food was immediately answered. Their Cook made us the first hot meal since our departure from England on the night of June 6th. We sat at a table with plates and silverware; the Negro soldiers served us like they were waiters in a resturant. I will never forget that meal. I would like to know where this Castle or Abbe is located as I was not paying attention to where I was going.

Like I have said - 40 years have passed. I can not remember your farm-house near the base of Hill 95. I am not sure, but I think I fought on the opposite side of the Hill from your farm. I will draw a map of what I remember on Hill 95. It may not be correct as I am now 68 years old and they say your memory is the second thing to go. If possible I would like for you to make a map of Hill 95 as I know those of us who are survivors would appreciate knowing where they have been. You know, in a war that which takes place, and which you can see becomes a memory difficult to forget. That which takes place but a stones throw away you never know about.

Since receiving your letter I have written or listed the men who fought on Hill 95. I am one of the few who has pictures of almost everyone in F Company. I am sure that my list of names is not complete. To help solve this problem I am going to contact our First Sgt. who lives at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Sgt. Scanlon I am sure can help me on those names that I might have miseed in making the list. After I get the list as complete as possible I will send you pictures of those Paratroopers who took Hill 95 away from the Germans. If you put the pictures in the barn all of the mice will leave.

We fellows get together each year - this year we will meet at Denver, Colorado in the Rocky Mountains. This is a two day trip by vehicle of 1250 miles for me. It is a beautiful place to go; the air is thin as Denver is 1-mile above sea-level. I have been there many times both to Paratroop Reunions and on hunting trips into the mountains. This year I am President of our Paratroop Association, and you can be sure I will read your letter at the Reunion.

For now I will close. I would like to inform you that your interest in locating the old members of F Company is certainly appreciated. Just becoming acquainted with you by mail has been a great pleasure. It is difficult to explain our experiences to people here at home as thay have never seen Normandy and words will not explain the picture.

ONLY YOU AND I KNOW

Hope to hear from you.

Happily yours,

Bill Guegold

On the evening of July 4th, Hill 95 was cleansed. Contact was made to the south with the units of the 2nd battalion of the 507th under Col. Raff.

After the attack of the 2nd battalion of the 508th, command had changed to Capt. Royal Taylor. Thus, in 24 hours, four officers had succeeded to be at the head of the battalion.

The 325th glider guys, in spite of the weariness from having no sleep, took their objective. The 507th, who had attacked in the direction of the road of Bocage, mounted the hill and made contact with the 508th from the south. But alas, when the day began, Raff's men discovered that they were entrenched in the middle of a German bivouac (temporary military encampment). The gripping heat that followed made fatalities on both side. The last fighting on Hill 95 took place on the morning of July 5th.

During the July 4-6, althought the hills of Poterie had been captured, the isolated groups of the enemy refused to lay down their arms, and restarted combat. The 319th artillery and the mortars of the 81st fired closely on the groups of resistance. On July 6th, a new pocket of resistance was discovered by soldiers on foot on Hill 95. Fox Company with Lt. Pollete and three Shermans intervened, putting an end to the stubborn resistance.

The majority of the patrols said that the ruins of La Haye du Puits could be infiltrated, but the orders opposed this, because the honor was to be given to the 79th division. At noon of July 6th, General Ridgway signaled to General Middleton that the hills of Poterie were in the hands of the 82nd AB Division. In four days, the paratroopers had taken their objectives The nearing depart to England would be enjoyed from a successful mission, even though at great cost.

On July 8th, the first units of the 8th Division passed the lines held by the paratroopers. The 82nd was relieved from the hills of La Haye du Puits. On July 13th, under the eyes of many hundreds of German prisoners assembled on the beach, the paratroopers borded their LST's for Southhampton.

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Covering seven kilometers in three days, the 82nd of Ridgway had killed 500 Germans, and had taken 772 prisoners. Among the losses, the 325th glider guys had been the most severely affected. Their attack on the face of Mont Castre (Hill 122) caused the loss of 14 officers and 289 men. The company that had the most men was numbered at 57, and the other 12. The crossfire of the Germans decimated this unit. For the 508th, the men in their foxholes of mud and water knew that the offensive had been attained when they reached La Haye du Puits.

After 30 days of combat since June 6th, all contact with the enemy had been stamped out. The men got up in the trucks for the first time and could even sleep next to the enemy's big guns.

For the 508th PIR of Col. Lindquist[25], 2056 men were dispatched of which 1161 were lost. We know of 307 who were buried in French soil.

It was the first stage for the victory.

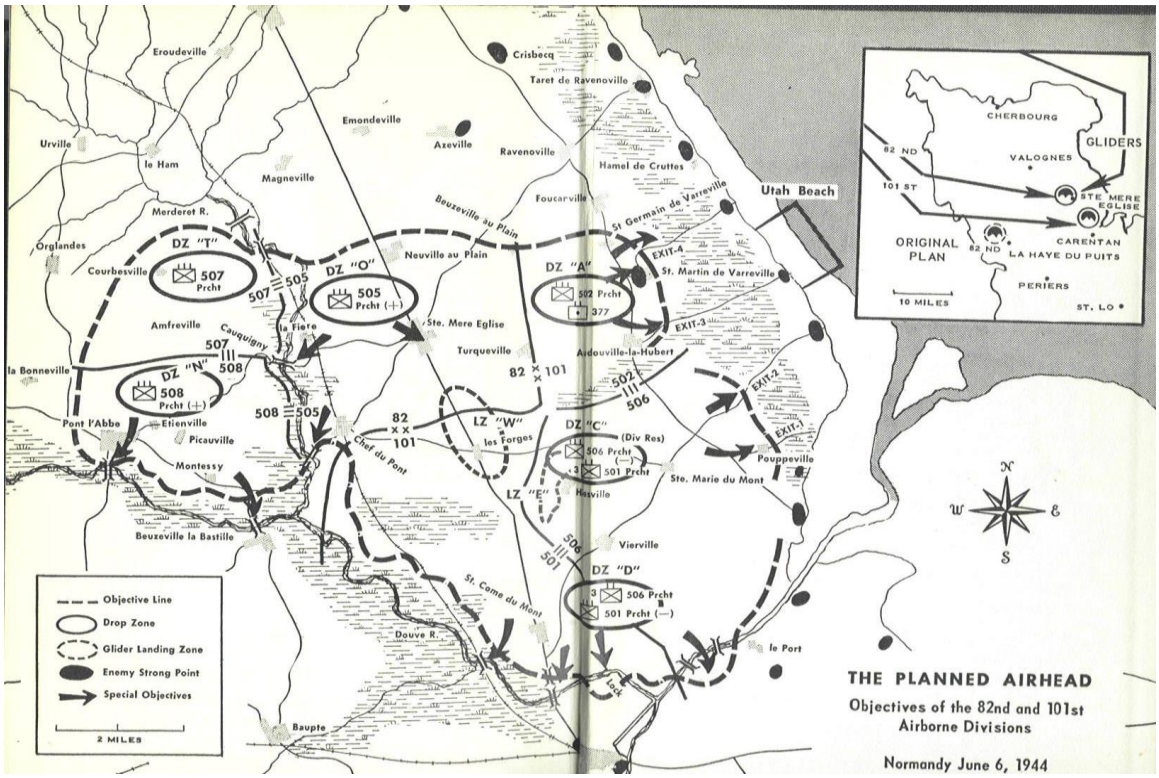
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As always, during the last offensive, the fate of the fallen men was different. The fatality rate was high in the speed of the attack. The wounded filled the relief posts. We regrouped the survivors around the phantom companies.

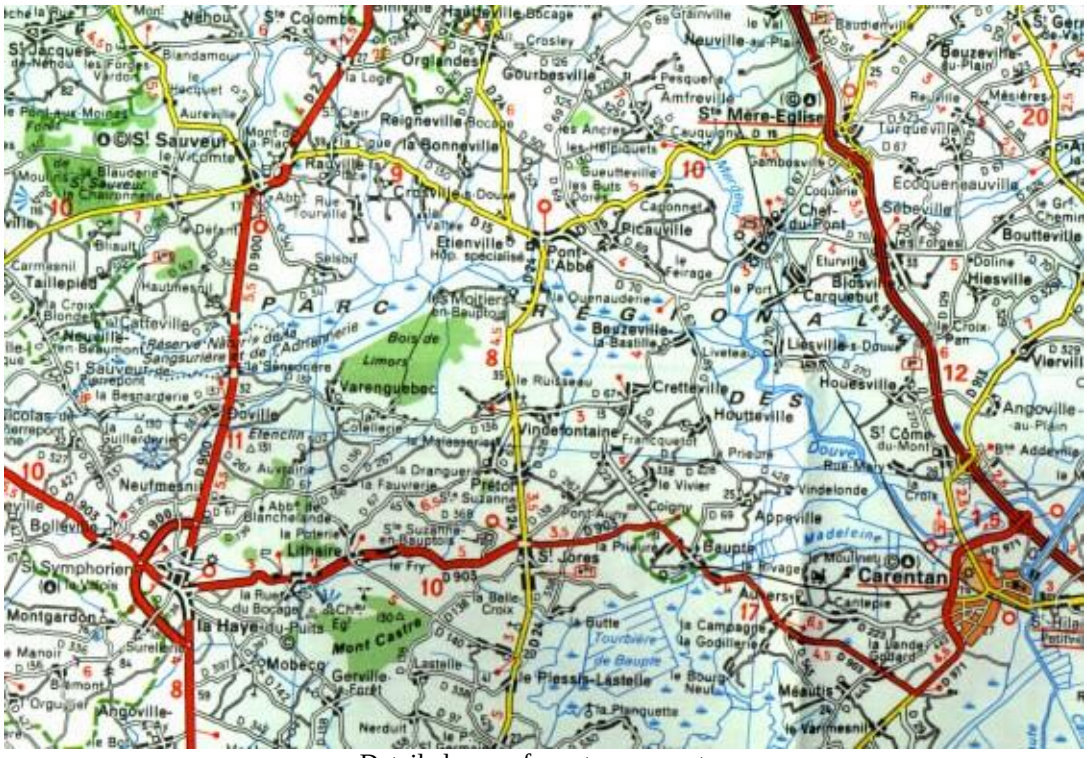
Sergeant Zane Schlemmer, mortar man of the 2nd battalion of the 508th, was hit during an artillery attack on July 3rd in departing for the attack on the woods of Limor. Put on a stretcher, he was evacuated to Utah beach. "After 27 days straight, I now found myself in a navy hospital. Then gave me a bath, hot coffee, peaches in syrup, and some sheets to sleep in. What incredible luxuries! After having slept at the feet of hedgerows, on the bare ground, in the bush for a month, I thought that nothing else existed."

Lt. Rex Combs of the 508th, progressed in a curve behind a small slope with his patrol near to Mt. Etenclin (Hill 131). Suddenly he heard a discussion between Germans. He saw from behind a hedgerow a strong enemy group sitting in a circle in a field getting some type of instruction. Without losing a second, he stood up and emptied three shots from his machine gun, starting a small fire near the terrified Germans. One after the other, they all raise their hands into the air. Lt. Rex Combs had captured 43 Germans.

At the moment that Zane Schlemmer was being transported to the navy hospital, Rex Combs regained his water filled foxhole at the foot of a hedgerow. He came to understand that we were going to recommend him for the Silver Star.



Overall Airborne Objectives of Normandy Invasion



Detailed map of paratroop country

[1] For more information:

82nd Airborne Historical Society
Box 70119
Fort Bragg, NC
28307-5100

82nd AB Div. Assn.
(gliders)
2959 East 123rd Ave.
Thornton, CO
80241

Books to read:

Zig Borough's *Tales of the Red Devils 508th*
105 East Cambridge Ave.
Greenwood SC 29649
803-229-2897
$14.00

On To Berlin: A Fighting General's True Story Of Airborne Combat In WWII
General James Maurice Gavin
Bantam Books, New York1964
ISBN: 0-553-13137-0
(out of print)

Beyond Valor
Patrick O'Donnell
www.thedropzone.org

Night Drop: The Airborne Invasion of Normandy
S.L.A. Marshall (historian of the WWII European Theatre)
Little, Brown, and Co.
Library of Congress Cat. Card No. 62-9537
(out of print)

Soldier
Matthew B. Ridgway as told to Harold Martin
(out of print)

The Airborne invasion of Normandy
Napier Crookenden (out of print)

101st AB in Normandy, Mark Bando www.101airborneWW2.com
Finest color photos by Captain Laffey taken in '44

The 508th PIR
Domonique Francois

The Devils Have Landed
Lew Milkovics

History of the 508th PIR
Sir William G. Lord, II

Airborne
Charles McDonald
Ballantines WWII History book #12

The Paras of June 6th
Philippe Jutras (French)
Published by the English in England

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see: www.red-devils.org (the 508th parachute infantry regiment association)
http://jump.to/giegold (Bill Giegold's homepage)
