On about 2 June, the battalion was called together and our mission was given to us by Col. Rudder. The battalion was to be split into three parts; Company's D, E and F were to assault Pointe do Hoc, destroy any German large caliber cannon installed in casements at the top, then proceed to a road leading to Grandcamp (sp) , block any German reinforcements and rendezvous with elements of the 101st Airborne Division, if possible. The guns were situated so that they could control the approaches to both Omaha and Utah Beaches. The assault would be from the sea, scaling the cliffs and then attacking the German positions. This would all be preceded by naval bombardment. A and B companies and the 5th Ranger Battalion were to land on Omaha Beach with elements of the 116th Infantry of the 29th Division and lead the assault on the German positions there. C Company was to land at a corner of Omaha Beach, get to the top of Pointe Perce (sp) and join up with us.

On 3 June, the battalion was split into the parts according to their mission and we boarded our transports. D, E and F companies along with parts of Headquarters company boarded a British ship, which I recall to be the Ben MacRee (sp). There were about 250 of us while the rest of the battalion was on a different ship. We were told that D-Day would be on 5 June and at daybreak. We stayed in the harbor at Weymouth waiting to go. It turned out that the weather was much too bad for any landings to take place on 5 June. Finally, we got the word that 6 June would be the day. Late that night the ships left the harbor for the run to France. Looking around, all you could see were ships from one end of the horizon to the other. There was a mixture of transports, destroyers, minesweepers and what not! The invasion landings were to take place at 6am but our contingent was scheduled to land at 0430. We were operating on what was called double British Summer time. It didn't get dark until close to midnight and started to get light at about 4am. In between, it wasn't completely dark. You could see well enough to do most anything, except maybe read a newspaper and if the moon was full, you could do that, too.

I'm assigned to the 2d platoon of "F" Company along with Lt. Jack Hill. I had not known him back in Camp Forrest but had been working with him since rejoining the Rangers. We had a good understanding of each other and our objectives. The Company Commander, Otto Masny kept us busy going over the plans for the landings and the procedures to be followed in case the landings didn't go as planned. (As if they ever did!) Our first goal was the gun emplacement nearest the left part of the Pont. After neutralizing that gun we were to proceed inland, through the small woods to the road leading from the Pont to the Grandcamp road. There we were to await the paratroopers and block any German reinforcements from accessing the Pont and from moving, in general. The platoon would be in two LCVPs (landing craft, vehicle and personnel). We would leave the Ben Machree by landing nets, loaded with as much ammunition we could carry.

At about 0400 hours, we got the word to begin disembarking. While climbing down the nets, the whole sky seemed to light up and the world was filled with thunder. The fleet

had begun to bombard the shore; it seemed from all directions. We could see plainly the shells impacting on the cliffs at the top as well as on the vertical slopes. The noise was unbelievable! At the same time, it was welcome because we felt that no one would be able to withstand the explosions that were taking place. If they could not, our landings would be just like the rehearsals we had done time after time.

In my boat, there were two BAR teams, two assault teams and a mortar team. There were three rocket launchers with ropes attached to the grapnels as well as toggle ropes and ladder extensions. Jack Hill was in another LCA with the same crews plus an extension ladder that could rise about 30 feet above the boat!. There was a machine gun mounted on the top with one Ranger designated to man it. As soon as "F" Company had disembarked we set out for Pont du Hoc following Col. Rudder with Headquarter Section. "D" and "E" Companies were doing the same thing. As we approached the cliffs, the naval bombardment slowed and then stopped completely. Good thing. It turned out that through an error on the part of the lead LCA we were all headed towards the wrong cliff! As we found out later, Col. Rudder became aware and told the boat driver he was going to the wrong place and threatened to blow his head off if he didn't go where Rudder told him to go. He went. We were about two miles down shore from our landing area. Up until this time, we had not been under any enemy fire. Now we started to take small arms fire from German troops on top of the cliffs because we were travelling parallel to the cliffs instead of heading directly towards them. Our boat was not hit but one of the others closer in to shore started to get direct hits from a machine gun. Off to the right, we saw one of the other boats start to sink. The men were bailing as fast as they could but to no avail. The boat did sink and all the troops were in the water with their flotation devices keeping them up. No one could stop to help! *We found out later that it was a D Company boat with the Company Commander on board. Most were picked by picket boats and taken back to England.*

While we were still about 30 or forty yards from shore, some of the boats started firing their rockets with the lines attached. Most of them fell short so we held off. Finally, four or five of the boats came to shore, followed by the rest of the command. We were probably the fourth boat to land. Now all the boats started their rocket launchers and we prepared to climb the cliffs, just like in training. The main difference was that we were really being shot at! The ropes were all wet from the surf and hard to get a grip on. Also some of the grapnels were either loose and didn't hold or they were being thrown back by the Germans at the top. One good thing was that the naval bombardment had blown loose a good part of the cliff and we didn't have to climb straight up. The dirt had piled up at the bottom giving us at least a start up. My platoon started up about on the farthest left part of the landing area. We had three ropes up that seemed to be holding. We needed both hands to climb so, necessarily, our weapons were slung or otherwise not readily available. Anytime we got a seemingly secure foothold, we'd stop, catch our breath and climb some more. All the time, we were being shot at from different positions above us. Fortunately, it was small arms and not machine gun. There was some automatic fire

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which was not accurate at that time. It seemed that the Germans would stick their head over the top, let loose a quick burst and then duck back. Every once in a while a grenade (potato masher) would be thrown. They did not come down on top of us but having been thrown from back of the lip of the cliff mostly exploded in the air. The German Schmeisser was called the burp gun. It was a semi-automatic weapon that went brrrrrrp. It was not too accurate but put out a lot of bullets in a hurry. Our Thompson, in contrast, went pow, pow ,pow. Much slower rate of fire and maybe, more accurate. During this time, some of the Rangers were using the fireman's ladder with the machine gun mounted on top to keep the German's heads down. Don't know how accurate they were, swinging back and forth, but they seemed to do the job.

I'd guess that during the climb up the cliff, we lost about 40 Rangers, either shot or fell and were incapacitated. Out of my half platoon only about 5 failed to reach the top. It was difficult to be more specific because Rangers were coming up on whatever ropes or ladders they could get to without any regard to where the rest of the group was. The main objective was to reach the top and start on our mission; destroy the guns, block the Grandcamp road and rendezvous with the Airborne, the other 2d Ranger Companies and the 5th Ranger Battalion. What we didn't know was that the Airborne had landed all spread out and on top of German troops on anti-invasion practice, that the other Ranger Companies were pinned down on Omaha Beach and that "C" Company lost their Company Commander, supplies and ammunition on top of being surrounded on Point Percee.

I grabbed the first Rangers I could find and started out for the gun emplacement that was directly ahead of us. We went from shell hole to shell hole, keeping as low as we could. There were about six of us and we leapfrogged one after the other. The front of the emplacement had been blown away and there were no Germans in sight inside. We got into the emplacement and found *no guns!* There were provisions for them but they had apparently not yet been put in place! Lt. Hill had gone into the next emplacement and found the same thing! So now the thing left to do was to find the Grandcamp road and block it. The rest of the Battalion had the same objective and small groups were all trying to head in the same direction. Unfortunately, there was no correlation to what we expected and what we could see. The naval and air bombardment had destroyed whatever landmarks we were expecting!

Here and there were groups of Rangers deciding on their own to get off the Point and get to the road junction. One problem was the terrain. All one could see were shell holes and broken pieces of equipment. We knew the direction of the road, which was about a half mile inland, but we didn't know where all the Krauts had gone. They were there someplace. The other problem was communication. None of the radios were working to any degree so we had to depend upon runners, hand signals and yelling! My radio operator was Sgt. Kimble (sp). He was running up to me when all of a sudden he stopped, opened his mouth and fell. He had been hit by small arms fire and died before anyone could get to him. We began to get both rifle and machine gun fire coming at us from

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many directions. It turned out that the Germans had connecting trenches all over the place. Fortunately they were expecting an attack from the land side and not from the sea so much of their field of fire was away from us instead of at us. That didn't stop machine gun and 20mm cannon from being turned around . Now that the naval gunfire had stopped in the immediate area, the Germans were beginning to come out of their holes and engaging us. Directly to our front was a partially destroyed bunker but it was manned and had a machine gun firing at us. Two or three Rangers tried to get to it but were cut down before they got close. I took the only 2 Rangers near me and took off to the flank of the bunker where we didn't think we would be seen. When we got to about 20 or 30 yards away all three of us threw grenades, a couple of which went in the bunker. Two Germans tried to get out but all three of us let loose at the same time and they dropped where they were. We couldn't take time to look in the bunker to see if there were more but immediately dove into the nearest shell hole. At the same time, about 100 yards away, Jack Hill had 3 or 4 Rangers with him and was having a firefight with some Germans in a trench. About 50 yards in the other direction, another firefight was going on. All seemed to be confusion but we knew that we had to get going on our way to the junction. If we stayed where we were sooner or later there were going to be counter attacks and our position was not very defensible. We had plenty of holes for protection but that was going to get us nowhere.

In groups of 2, 3 and 4, "F" Company started to leap frog ahead from crater to crater towards the hedgerows at the far end of the Point. We were getting sporadic, so far, small arms fire both from the hedge rows and from another fortified bunker. Now we started to get automatic 20 mm fire from a position off to the left. We couldn't yet get close enough to it to throw grenades so we did our best to keep firing at it so the Krauts would keep their heads down. A group of Rangers from one of the other companies came at it from the other side. One had a bazooka and fired into the bunker. It seemed that had done the job. Two Germans came out with their hands up and stood at the edge of the bunker. Two of our Rangers got up and started for them. Jack Hill yelled at them to get down but, before they could, they were riddled by burp guns from the bunker. Now, we all started for the bunker, shooting first the two Germans, throwing grenades at the bunker and yelling for any one left to come out. So much for taking prisoners! It turned out that there had been several Krauts still in the bunker, all of whom were killed in the assault.

The next thing was that both of our small groups started to get sniper fire coming from what was an observation bunker about 100 yards off to our left. We saw a German run out, throw a grenade over the cliff and duck back into the bunker. He did this two or three times. I took three of our Rangers and started for the tower. At the same time, Lt. Hill took a group and started for the other side. The Germans recognized what we were doing and started almost continuous fire. A sergeant with me from another Company was hit and fell. Lt. Hill's group lost two men. He still had a bazooka and as soon as he was in range fired two rounds at the front of the bunker. That gave us enough time to get to the blind side and start with grenades. We blew out the door and threw 2 or 3 inside. No return fire came out. No Germans came out, either.

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About this time, Sgt. "Red" Ryan came running up to me and asked what was next. I asked if any of the rest of the platoon was around. He told me he didn't know but the place was lousy with Rangers and some Germans mixed in. He said that they kept popping out of trenches, taking a couple of pot shots and then ducking back in again, I said that it was time we started for the road junction that was our prime mission. I still had my carbine with one 30 round clip and my .45, which I hadn't used. Also, still had 2 grenades. I went to another shell hole and found two wounded Rangers. I called for the Medics, picked up another 30 round clip and went back to the hole. By now there were about 10 of us in 2 or 3 holes. There were no mines that we could see. Either they weren't there because we weren't expected from the direction of the Channel or they had been exploded by the bombardment. At least we had the freedom to move around from hole to hole without that worry! Near what was left of a farm building we joined up with another "F" Company patrol and started for the secondary road that ran along a hedgerow. You couldn't really call it a road; it was more of a lane. Off to our left, looking over Omaha Beach there was a German machine gun firing down at the troops landing there. Jack Hill took 3 or 4 of our group and circled to the right. I took 3 more and started to the left. As we got close enough to start firing, we realized that we could no longer see the emplacement. There was an overhang that was hiding it from our position but Hill's group had a direct line to it. They threw a couple of grenades which fell short but made the gunners stand up to find out where their danger was coming from. We took them under fire; two went down and the third stood up yelling "Kamerad"! We weren't sure that he was alone, so rather than going after him, we yelled back "Kommen sie heir mit der hande hoch"! *As far as we knew it meant, "Come here with your hands up.* It worked and down he came. I sent him towards the rear with one of the Rangers with him.

Now we started for that hedgerow. I guess we all were alert for anything. We knew that the hedgerows made almost perfect concealment for defensive positions and we had nothing with which to blow holes in them. We had no bangalore torpedoes and I didn't think we had any bazooka shells left. The hedgerows were about 5-6 feet high and covered with shrubbery of one sort or another on top. They were also about 3-4 feet deep and made a barrier to almost anything. Going forward, one group after the other we got to the base of the hedgerow. I couldn't figure out why it was so easy. I stuck my head up and looked over the top. There was nothing except the same crap we had been coming through: one shell hole after another! All of a sudden, two Rangers came running up from that side of the row. They were two Sergeants from another Company. They pointed off behind them and there were the four large caliber cannons that we had expected to see in the emplacements. They looked all ready to go with ammunition piled up behind each gun. There were NO gun crews around. One of the Sergeants said that he had seen them at the far end of the open field where the guns were. He said that if we could cover them, the two of them would get to the guns, drop thermite grenades down the tubes, smash the sights and get back. Jack Hill set his group on top of the row; I took mine down to the end of the row, climbed over and set up with the BAR to give covering fire. The two Rangers went running up to the guns and while one stuck a thermite grenade in the tube and slammed the breech shut, the other smashed the gun sight. They got two done before they

2-25

were noticed. A group of Krauts started to run towards the guns and then Jack's group and mine gave them covering fire. The Krauts didn't know how many of us there were and ran back behind the next hedgerow. Our two Rangers went to the other two guns and put them out of commission also. We figured that these four guns were in position to fire not only at Omaha and Utah beaches but also at the naval units at sea.

It is now about 9 or 9:30 but it seemed like we had been going all day instead of 3 hours! Right behind the second hedgerow was our next objective, the Grandcamp road. We had to get to the junction of the lane and that road and set up a roadblock. "E" Company had another junction to do the same thing. Jack Hill and I gathered as many of the "F" Company Rangers as we could. We split into 3 groups to go over the hedgerow and go for the road. We knew that the Germans now knew where we were but didn't know how many of us there were. We felt that once we got over the hedgerow there was plenty of cover. There were going to be the same shell holes we had been using, all over the place. We knew there were also going to be the trenches and dugouts the Germans were using. So, singly, then by twos, over the hedgerows we went. We were receiving sporadic small arms fire and calls for "Medic" were coming up all over the place. The Ranger behind me going over was hit two or three times and just lay on top of the row. The next group pulled him down into the field we had just left. I never did find out who he was or how he fared.

Again, by twos and threes we went from hole to hole until we got to within about 50 yards of the junction. There must have been about 10 to 15 Rangers scattered about in different holes. From the sounds coming from all around us, we knew that we all were in firefights with groups of Krauts. We didn't know how many they were and they still didn't know how many we were! We, however, were now in position around the road junction and started to set up fire teams to hold it. The teams were in shell holes and in a ditch along the road. I sent two of the Rangers back to the other field to locate and bring up a machine gun and as many BAR men as they could find. Ammunition was starting to run low. I had about half of my clip left and two grenades. Jack Hill sent a couple of his Rangers to scavenge as much arms and ammo as they could find scattered around. They went from hole to hole and we all tried to cover them with intermittent fire.

In about 15 to 20 minutes, up came two machine gun teams, 2 BARs and a whole bunch of ammo, along with about 10 more Rangers. We set about creating a defensive position around the junction. We put 2 or 3 Rangers in shell holes trying to be sure that we wouldn't be shooting at each other. We put the two machine gun teams about 50 yards apart covering the junction and the whole "F" Company group. I would guess that by now there were about 30 of us in various holes. We were far enough apart so that any incoming mortar fire could only hit one group and close enough so that we could provide each other covering fire. We could only hope that the Krauts had no tanks or other armored vehicles in the area. We had one bazooka and about 3 rounds for it. Not much to

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consider stopping a tank. We tried to settle in and wait for reinforcements. The balance of the 2d Ranger Bn had landed on Omaha Beach and was supposed to come up and assist us. We didn't know at that time the trouble they were having on the beach. Communications were practically non-existent. Radios were not working, there were no phone lines laid and, still, the only way to get messages was to use a runner. We kept asking HQ, which was on the Pointe for reinforcements and ammunition and kept getting the same answer. No and none! Capt. Masny was nowhere to be seen. Again, we found out later that Col. Rudder had pressed him into service back at HQ to establish a perimeter defense. We were on our own with nothing to do except to hold onto that road junction and prevent any Germans from using it. The only problem there was that the Germans were already both in front and behind us. It's a good thing they were in small groups and unable to establish a coordinated attack. That didn't stop them from jumping up out of their prepared positions, firing a few rounds and jumping back down.

I think it is now about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. No one has eaten or had anything to drink since we landed. I took out my emergency ration, a chocolate bar and did my best to eat it. It tasted wonderful, even though it was hard as a rock. Sgt. Ryan and a corporal, whose name I don't remember, joined me in the hole. It seemed quiet for a while so we tried to relax. Impossible, we were all tense, jumpy and ready to shoot at the least provocation! The war was going on all around us, but for a while, it left us alone. The main action was down at the beaches. Looking down from our height we could see part of the fighting. It seemed to be a jumble of troops, vehicles, tank traps and all kinds of junk. It didn't seem that our troops were moving off the beach, though. I thought, "Boy, I'm glad I'm up here and not down there".

We began to hear some noises coming down the road and got ready for whatever was coming. Here came a German patrol of about 4, in single file down the middle of the road. Our first group of Rangers waited 'til they passed, then opened up and dropped all four. From my hole, I can see another bunch of Krauts working their way around the edge of the hedgerow. I poked Ryan to get ready. He had a BAR and as they cleared the end we both started shooting. I know we hit two and the others just disappeared. We figured they had dropped into a hole or trench. I have no more ammo for my carbine but I do have my .45. I know there are more ammo clips in some of the "friendly" holes but I'm not about to go after it as long as Ryan is there with the BAR.

Off to my right, Lt. Hill was in another hole with one of the Sergeants. There was some German machine gun fire coming from his right flank. He apparently decided to go see what was going on. He and the Sgt. jumped out of the hole. Some one yelled at him to "get your ass down" but Jack kept on going. From where I was, it seemed that he was hit by 2 bursts from burp guns. He just went down and stayed down. *Later, I found out that he had been killed, instantly.* The Sgt. with him was hit but was able to get into a hole with another couple of Rangers. "Medic"! Now I know the reason for supernumeraries. As far as I can see, I'm the last platoon leader anywhere in sight!

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All of a sudden, someone yelled "Lieutenant, LOOK OUT"! I turned around and here came a Kraut about 15 feet away at full tilt, with rifle and bayonet straight for me! Almost without thinking, I pointed my .45 and fired twice as fast as I could. The first round stopped him in his tracks and the second knocked him back about 5 feet in the air. He was dead before he hit the ground. *You sometimes wonder why people do what they do. We found out that the rifle was loaded and all the poor dumb son of a bitch had to do was pull the trigger and he would have gotten his American!* Anyhow, the rifle and bayonet kept coming, hit the edge of the shell hole and the bayonet went into my right thigh! It hurt like hell. I looked around to make sure no one else had any crazy ideas, asked Ryan to keep an eye out, sat down and dropped my trousers. The blood was coming out but not in spurts. I got my first aid packet off my helmet, poured sulfa powder into the wound and bandaged it as tight as I could. It was pointless to call for a Medic. He wouldn't be able to do more than I had and others were in much worse shape. I pulled up my pants and went back to work.

We have basically accomplished our D-Day mission, which was to knock out the German artillery and establish the roadblock on the Grandcamp road. I believe we were the first unit to have accomplished the mission assigned. Now we have to hold the roadblock and prevent the Germans from using it to provide reinforcements or to establish positions overlooking the two beaches. A lieutenant from "D" Company came up with about 5 Rangers and we set about strengthening our position. I'd guess that we were trying to cover an area about 500 yards along both sides of the road and stretching back to the hedgerow. There was no need to dig fox holes because there were too many of them for us to use anyhow. I'm not sure how many Rangers we had but I think there were about 20 to 30 of us. There was no way of telling neither how many were wounded nor how much ammunition we had.

It is now about 2100 (9pm) hours and still pretty much daylight. I may have mentioned earlier that we are on what was called "double British Summertime". About two hours is picked up and it doesn't really get dark until after midnight and sometimes not even then. We do know that we haven't yet seen a real counter attack and we are not in too good a position. We are still spread out and know that there are German troops both in front and behind us. The trenches and tunnels are giving us the most problems because the Krauts pop out, shoot and then go back underground! Every once in a while you could hear a Ranger shout "Got the son of a bitch!" Or other words to the same effect. You could also hear "Medic!" almost just as often.

We began to be very careful about any movement from shell hole to shell hole. First, we didn't want to give the Germans too much information about how many we were or where we were and, second, we didn't want to be shot at by other Rangers! We were all kind of trigger happy and tended to shoot at any perceived threat, even though most of us had little ammunition. A runner from HQ came up with good news. Col. Rudder had been able to somehow get ammunition up from the beach and as soon as possible we would get