

HISTORY OF THE 5th RANGER BN.
by Henry S. Glassman

worldwartwoveterans.org

September 28, 1978

To my friend Sam,
It is an honor to
present this to you

- warmly,

Jeff Paros

worldwartwoveterans.org

“Lead The Way, Rangers”



By
HENRY S. GLASSMAN

HENRY GLASSMAN
8909 NOYES CIRCLE
RANDALLSTOWN, MD. 21138

"LEAD THE WAY, RANGERS"

A History Of The Fifth Ranger Battalion

veterans.org

By
Henry S. Glassman

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION



REV. JOSEPH R. LACY, Captain, Chaplain
United States Army.

Known reverently to all, regardless of religious sect, as "Our Chaplain". A friend in need, through "thick and thin", constant comforter to sick and wounded. The "PRIDE OF THE BATTALION", doing a job fearlessly and courageously as only one who loves God more than he fears death, could undertake.

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1945

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

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worldwartwo



Reverso

EXTRACTS FROM ACTIVATION ORDERS

The Fifth Ranger Infantry Battalion was activated on September 1, 1943, under provisions of an Army Ground Forces letter, which included in part the following directive:

"All personnel will be chosen from volunteers of above normal mental and physical condition. Personnel should be under 28 years of age and should meet all physical requirements for that of a parachutist, excepting that he may not be required to jump from an airplane in flight".

"All personnel will be chosen from units which have completed and participated in a division sized maneuver".

"All personnel will be required to qualify with each arm furnished the battalion".

Any personnel found not meeting above qualification, will on request of Commander concerned, be transferred to the unit from whence he came".

"Battalion will be prepared to undergo further directed training commencing January 1, 1944, as a part of an overseas command".

"Direct telephone or personal communication is authorized between Battalion Commander and Commanding General, Army Ground Forces".

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

INTRODUCTION

The narrative that follows this introduction, is a true account of the activation, training and unforgettable operations of the Fifth Ranger Battalion, prepared for the men of the battalion as a never-to-be-forgotten record of one small unit of a great fighting force that brought the defeat of the greatest military power in all history, — Nazi Germany.

For the men of the Fifth Rangers, all facts brought forth in this introduction, are imbedded in the thoughts and very hearts of all Rangers, but it is for their friends and relatives who will undoubtedly be reading this history, that the writer believes it necessary to present a picture of the type men and type of organization that made up the Fifth Rangers, and made the heroic feats and miraculous accomplishments of this battalion, possible.

Contrary to the beliefs of the uninformed, the Rangers was not made up of former convicts, super-athletes or general "tough guys". Men of the Rangers were average men, but with above average spirit, — every man a volunteer for an outfit that he knew would be assigned the more dangerous, more difficult, assignments of this war. For that reason, the "esprit de corps" of the Rangers had always far surpassed that of other organizations, and the spirit of cooperation and coordination was never absent from any assignment, no matter how difficult or seemingly impossible the task. This spirit was furthered by the leadership of the officers, — the Battalion and Company Commanders, always in front of their attacking troops, setting an example for men who really needed no example.

Combat decorations throughout the battalion, were numerous, as were the Awards of the Purple Heart.

It is impossible to say too much for the spirit of this battalion of Rangers, — a fact proven by the History that follows, and so present in the character of the men who say, — so proudly, — "We are the Fifth Rangers!".

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

I

IN MEMORIAM

Battles and wars cannot be fought and won without the loss of lives, and the hard fought battles and resounding victories won by the Fifth Rangers were no exceptions. For each heroic assault, — for each town taken, — yes, every foot of ground acquired, — for every defensive line courageously held, the Rangers paid in lives. To the fallen Rangers, the survivors owe their lives, for each died doing his share of the task, — often more than his share. For these fallen Rangers, the enemy paid dearly, for they fell only after taking a heavy toll of enemy lives, — fell to enable their fellow Rangers to advance and take their objectives. These Rangers will never be forgotten, for their names and their deeds have become a prized possession of every member of the Fifth Ranger Battalion, — and in the battles that followed their deaths, their much needed presence was irreplaceable.

To the valor and heroism of these men, we surviving Rangers humbly dedicate the victorious campaigns in which they fell.

We Dedicate The —

"D" DAY CAMPAIGN (6—14 June 1944) to:

Anderson, Dee C.	Ist Lt.	0-1305704
Bolton, Harry I.	Pfc	37242999
Banning, Elmo E.	Tec 5	37516256
Bursch, Floyd A.	Tec 5	37097013
Chiatello, George F.	Pfc	33426876
Fox, William J.	Tec 5	32171456
Gardner, Howard T.	Pfc	32587514

Laboda, Bernard J.	Pfc	33359431
Miller, Robert T.	Pvt	36564331
Morgan, Carl W.	Pfc	35667924
Morse, Mathew E.	Pfc	6459658
Oboryshko, Steven	Tec 5	32367640
Pavey, Paul H.	Pfc	6341591
Read, Clinton O.	Tec 5	15104074
Reilley, William F.	S/Sgt	32147081
Spring, Bernard V.	Pfc	35627617
Stein, Robert F.	Pfc	20101434
Steinen, Robert C.	Pfc	36255847
Szerecz, Stephen	Tec 5	35605996
Tarlano, Chester A.	Pfc	12159974
Wallace, Dana W.	Tec 5	32834623
Wassil, Nicholas	Pfc	31196645
Wilhelm, Raymond F.	Pfc	33431735
Zach, Walter T.	T/Sgt	37466056

JULY CAMPAIGN to:

Harris, Donald E.	Sgt.	35097012
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BREST CAMPAIGN (30 August to 20 September 1944) to:

Akers, Bernard C, Jr.	Pfc	31321003
Baker, Clark L.	Pfc	33573107
Campos, Joseph	Pfc	32800652
Carawan, James C.	Sgt	34455843
Edison, Alonzo F.	Pfc	33561341
Ford, Henry M.	Pfc	35702936
Gilmore, Richard J.	Pvt	5754364
Henderson, Lewis H.	Pfc	6579856
Kaufman, Ezra A.	Sgt	39464038
Lanham, Thomas E.	Pvt	6947405
Loe, Rex V.	Tec 5	37476192
Madore, Lawrence R.	Tec 5	11102009
Manifold, John W.	Tec 5	35099300

Messuri, Joe N.	Tec 5	35051484
Pascoe, Howard W.	Sgt.	32836002
Plaskon, Peter J.	Pfc	12067603
Powell, Harvie C.	T/Sgt	34630631
Rahme, Eugene D.	Pfc	13051101
Sigler, Gerald H.	Tec 5	35608407
Snook, Harold R.	Sgt.	37162523
Striker, Herbert L.	Tec 5	33426844
Tomlinson, Clifford M.	Sgt	18008611
Usyk, David	Pfc	33470334
Zima, Albin J.	S/Sgt	20723812

SAAR CAMPAIGN (3-22 December 1944) to:

Filmer, Thomas X.	Pfc	31231961
Hendricks, Francis J.	Pfc	32569855
Kaval, Stanley W.	Pfc	36031824
Keiber, Albert G.	Pvt	17116457
Kimble, Melvin H.	Pvt	35760775
Labhart, Hoesli F.	Pvt	6984107
Moody, Willie W.	S/Sgt	33628019
Nelson, Raymond G.	Pfc	36264563
Neuman, Edward J.	Pfc	37665331
Norman, Raymond B.	Pfc	34394889
Paskill, Daniel G.	Pfc	33594186
Pelkey, Paul E.	Tec 5	33017171
Preston, Lewis W.	Pvt	36119351
Samborowski, Leo G.	Pfc	33463330
Seidel, Gerald E.	Pvt	36825038
Stump, William A.	Pfc	33426692
Switch, Steve	Pfc	35768901
Sichak, Nick	Sgt	33113957

IRSCH-ZERF CAMPAIGN (14 February to 5 March 1945) to:

Byrne, William P., Jr.	Capt.	0-1303845
Aust, Richard H.	Ist Lt.	0-1316362

Adams, Thomas W.	Pvt	33113594
Alday, Hewey	Pfc	34784163
Anderson, Leonhard O.	Pfc	35062333
Briscoe, Lawrence L.	Pfc	39831609
Corbett, Ernest T.	Pvt	33922385
Davis, William F.	Tec 5	33138537
Doback, Henry J.	Pvt	36470328
Dufour, Francis D.	Pfc	16063201
Germain, Irvin L.	Tec 5	36314276
Gibbons, John B.	Pfc	11116500
Gilbert, John R.	Pfc	37456659
Gordon, James S., Jr.	Pvt	36904900
Gratwohl, Henry L., Jr.	Pfc	13053426
Hart, William H.	Pfc	39096360
Huff, William H.	Pvt	33407532
Johnston, Richard H.	Pvt	35904854
Kadhursky, Ernest J.	Pfc	33704931
Kay, George A.	Pvt	36987577
Kijanka, Stanley J.	T/Sgt	31028172
Knight, Elwood	Pvt	31471654
Lambert, Lawrence D.	Pfc	15336694
Mapes, Edward I.	Pfc	37467459
McGaughey, Russell A.	Pvt	33768941
Meyers, Maurice L.	Pfc	37144373
Miela, Joseph J.	Pfc	36163130
Minor, Charles F., J.	Sgt	12184280
Monihan, Earl R.	Pfc	37144495
Niblach, Jesse M.	Pfc	18051884
Pitts, Arthur H.	Pfc	34649162
Portell, Charles A.	Pfc	37608110
Posey, Lloyd F.	S/Sgt	35099052
Racette, Hubert H.	Cpl	31200049
Ravitz, Adolph D.	S/Sgt	20101948
Smith, Ellwood	Pvt	39698439
Sorensen, Swen	Pvt	36948715
Stoneburg, Ernest N.	Pvt	42114869

Switay, Albin F.	Pfc	33507732
Tomaso, John	Pvt	31433138
Vickers, Joseph D, Jr.	Pfc	13129607
Walters, Ted M.	S/Sgt	36193084
Ward, Carl L.	Pfc	35515315
Wheeler, Wallace W.	Pvt	11084780
Willerton, Charles H, Jr.	Pfc	36697749

CAMPAIGN FROM 4 APRIL TO V-E DAY to:

Hoffmann, Thomas V.	Pvt	35851517
Moore, William L.	Pvt	34128017
Onstott, Carl F.	Pvt	35851517

May their sacrifices and achievements be forever a symbol of what was necessary to preserve the American way of life, and by the grace of God, may the American people never forget them.

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

II

ACTIVATION AND TRAINING

On 1 September 1943, at Camp Forrest, Tenn., the Fifth Ranger Battalion was activated, with 34 Officers and 563 Enlisted Men. Ranger training began at Camp Forrest on 14 September 1943, and continued through 3 November 1943, with emphasis placed on Physical Training and Combat Training. A vigorous program of Wrestling, Boxing, Swimming, Speed Marches, Mass rough and tumble body contact exercises and log drill was planned. While at Camp Forrest, every Ranger learned the mechanical functioning of all weapons, fired every weapon and had to qualify in every weapon. An endless pursuit of combat exercises, by squad, platoon and company was made, and rapidly brought to perfection peak. "Commando" raid and house to house fighting was learned, and the training was rounded off with Compass Courses, Infiltration Courses and Training Films.

With preliminary basic Ranger training completed, the battalion moved to the Amphibious Training Base at Fort Pierce, Florida, on 5 November 1943. At Fort Pierce, the Rangers went into more intensive, further specialized training in practical use and maintainance of rubber boats, Coastal Raids in which actual capture of towns and strongpoints were maneuvered. Tactical study and employment of Combined Naval Operations became an important part of Ranger training, as did the use of all types of amphibious landing craft. This training continued untiringly until 20 November 1943, and during all the training, the sharp eyes of experienced instructors weeded out the officers and men who were not all that was required for a Ranger to be.

On 20 November 1943, the Fifth Ranger Battalion moved to Fort Dix, N. J., where it was assigned to ETOUSA and attached to the First U. S. Army. Preparation for movement overseas followed, with further speed marches, tactical five day problems for company and battalion, and more intensive qualification firing of all weapons. This same training was continued when on 20 December 1943, the battalion moved to Camp Kilmer, N. J., Port of Embarkation, — and even at this late date, officers and men were strictly being eliminated, allowing only the finest type of soldier, physically and mentally, to remain as members of the Fifth Rangers.

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

III

OVERSEAS TRAINING

On 8 January 1944, the Rangers left New York harbor on HMS Mauretania, — destination, SECRET. A slight accident took place, and HMS Mauretania collided with a freighter and had to be towed back into the harbor for repairs. However, repairs were made with the speed that only war can achieve, and the Mauretania with the Rangers, was on its way on the following day.

On 18 January 1944, the Mauretania docked at Liverpool, England, after crossing the ocean unescorted, on a trip uneventful except for radio submarine warnings which necessitated a deceptive zig-zag course. 19 January 1944 and a trip by rail, found the Fifth Ranger Battalion in Leominster, England, there to continue its Camp Forrest training, only even more vigorously. It was here at Leominster, that orders were received, changing assignment of the Rangers from ETOUSA to VIII Corps, on 22 January 1944.

On 1 March 1944, the Rangers left Leominster, England for a month of training in Scotland, — site of the British Commando Training, — a month that the Rangers have never stopped discussing, — a month of the most difficult marches and problems, the most tiring training that any soldier has ever experienced. It was this training in Scotland that the Rangers believe brought them through the Invasion of France and all of the difficult assignments that followed. The hills of Scotland proved to be more than anything that had been encountered in former Ranger training, and here Rangers were made or lost. On the coast lines of Scotland, Amphibious landing operations were practiced daily,

— assault landings on beaches specially prepared with barbed wire, beach obstacles and every type of anti — assault landing device that our Air Corps had been able to photograph on the beaches of Normandy, plus every device that G-2 could conceive. Upon completion of infiltration of this maize of defenses, the battalion practiced the art of reassembling at rallying points, for the continuation of the attack. Too much can not be said for the Scotland training. To it, many of the Rangers owe their lives and their success.

From Scotland to England, — 3 April 1944, — to the Assault Training Center at Braunton, England. Here a change of command took place, — Major Max F. Schneider replaced Lt. Col. Owen E. Carter who had left the battalion in Scotland. Also a change in attachment, — V Corps instead of VIII Corps.

At Braunton, the Rangers took the Assault Course, under the direction of the Assault Training Center. Training included fire and movement assaults on strongpoints and hedge hogs, combined Naval Operation landings, study of mines and demolitions and street fighting. From 27 April 1944 to 5 May 1944, the Battalion took part in "Fabius" exercises, — Amphibius Maneuvers including embarkation on LCAs, assault landings, land campaigns that followed the landings and training in every phase of operations expected to be encountered in the Invasion of France.

Movements that followed, took the Rangers to Swanage, England on 6 May 1944, — where training in Cliff scaling with ropes and steel ladders was received: — to Dorchester, England on 17 May 1944, and finally to the last point in England, — Weymouth Harbor on 1 June 1944, where the Rangers boarded the HMS Prince Leopold and HMS Prince Baudouin. Five days were spent aboard ship, briefing and completing preparations for assault landings on "D" Day, at first announced to be 5 June 1944, but due to bad weather, changed to 6 June 1944.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION SHIP COMMANDER,
O. C. BRITISH NAVAL FORCE

FRANCE, 27 July 1944.

Dear Sir:

Ever since "D" Day with its excitement and experiences, I have been awaiting the opportunity to adequately express my deep appreciation for the magnificent performance of the Officers and crew of the "Prince Baudouin". We may attribute our comparatively light casualties on the initial landing entirely to the skill and cool leadership which brought our organization to the beach intact and in fighting form. The difficulties of navigation, the fearful opposition and the many unexpected obstacles were overcome coolly and courageously so that far from causing undue excitement, the dangers were minimized. The cheery "Good Luck", which was the coxwains Godspeed to each one, aided further inspiration and steadiness.

While coolness and courage were the order of the day, I wish to especially commend the outstanding performance of Lt. West, the Flotilla commander.

The intricate system of mine-laden obstacles made it necessary that he expose himself to heavy enemy fire while guiding the LCA's. Leaning over the side of the craft, directing their progress by handsignals he performed with such gallantry and efficiency that our boats landed high on the beach to give our men the best possible start. Please extend to Lt. West my personal thanks for an outstanding performance, in keeping with the highest traditions of your British seamanship.

There was more, however, to the action than the efficiency of the L. C. A. crews and the last minute heroism of individuals. Ranger morale was high and had been kept high by those intangible forces which work directly on the spirit. The Rangers

enjoyed the hospitality of your ship, the comradeship with its crew, the friendly interest of the ship's officers. Together, we found much common ground for sensible discussion, many occasions for spirited humor and at Divine Services a further and deeper fellowship. As a result the ever memorable call, "United States Rangers, Embarkation Stations", found us ready to carry on with firm conviction that an early Victory and a lasting Peace would be the inevitable result of our Allied effort.

Finally, Sir, since you placed such an important part in our success, may I in the name of my officers and men express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation? Such a manifestation of coordination, seamanship and gallantry was due to your careful planning and competent leadership. It is my sincere hope that the casualties suffered by your men were few and slight; and I am looking forward to an early renewal of our acquaintance aboard the "Prince Baudouin".

With every expression of best wishes and kindest personal regards to you and the members of your command, I remain,

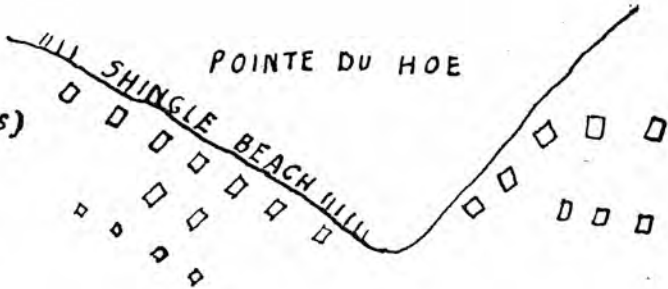
Sincerely yours,

RICHARD P. SULLIVAN
Major, 5th Ranger Bn.
U. S. A.

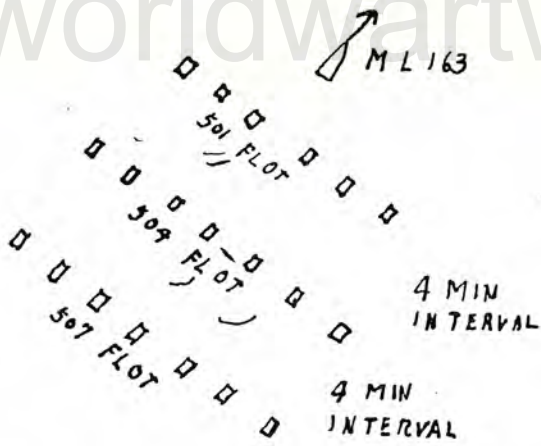
D DAY OPERATIONS LANDING ON SECTOR CHARLIE

H HOUR
(520 AND 522 FLOTILLAS)

H + 5
(4 DUKWS)



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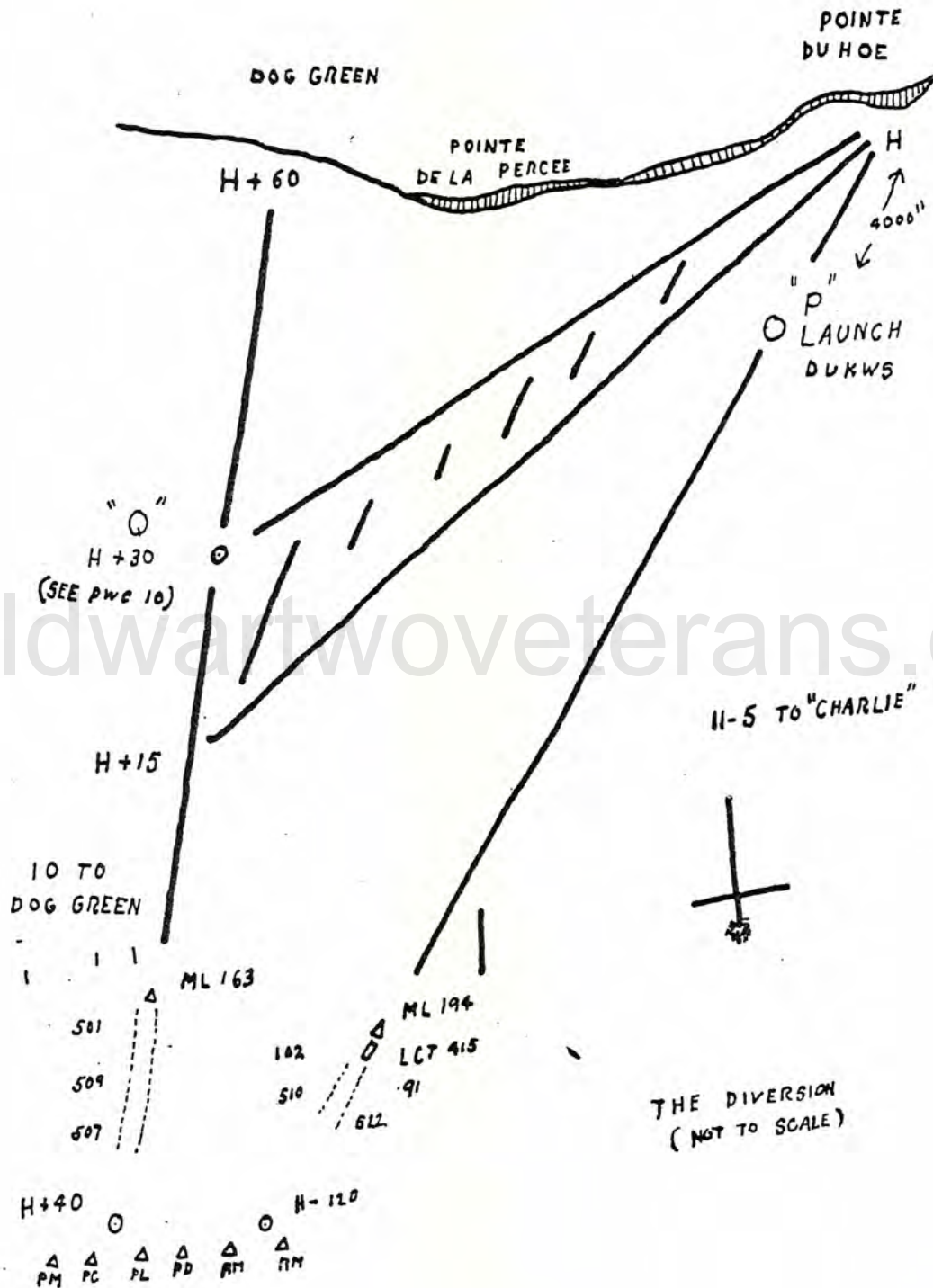
ML 163



NOT TO SCALE

↑ LCT 413 TAKING STATION
 ☒ ASTERN OF 507 FLOT

D DAY OPERATIONS



ENGLISH CHANNEL

POINTE
DU HOE

GRANDCAMP

5TH RANGER BN
8 JUNE 44

ST PIERRE
DU MONT

5TH RANGER BN
LANDED HERE
H-HOUR D-DAY
6 JUNE 44



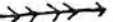


VIERVILL
SVR-MER

5TH RANGER BN
6-7 JUNE 44

FLOODED AREA

worldwarveterans.org

D-DAY OPERATIONS

- COAST LINE 
- FLOODED AREA 
- ROUTE OF ATTACK 
- GOOD ROAD 
- POOR ROAD 

MAISY
5TH RANGER BN
JUNE 44

5TH RANGER BN
16 JUNE 44

OSMANVILLE

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

IV

"D" DAY OPERATIONS

"D" Day, 6 June 1944, — and will a Ranger ever forget it? 0430 hours and into the LCAs, to start the ten mile dash to the coast of France, in a sea choppy enough to turn the stomach of "Sinbad, the Sailor".

Approaching the beach, it was plain to see that the Germans did not desire our social call. The beach was protected by numerous underwater obstacles consisting of elements "C", hedgehogs and tetrahedra, many with Teller-Mines attached. Mortar and artillery shells continually burst in the area of these obstacles, and a heavy concentration of machine gun and small arms fire swept the beach. About 75 yards from the water's edge, a four foot sea wall ran laterally along the beach. Our Naval Bombardment had set fire to the vegetation above the beach, and a pall of smoke obscured that area.

The first wave to hit the beach consisted of half of Battalion Headquarters, Companies "A", "B" and "E", landing on a strip of beach designated as Omaha Dog White Beach. Actually, the landing point for these Rangers was Dog Green, but Lt. Col. Max Schneider, seeing the fabulous volume of fire that covered Dog Green Beach, ordered the flotilla commander to touch-down his craft east of the intended landing point. This first wave crossed the beach in good order, with few casualties, and halted temporarily in rear of the sea wall, and immediately reorganized. The second wave, consisting of half of Battalion Headquarters, Companies "C", "D" and one platoon of "F" Company repeated the performance of the first wave. The other platoon of "F" Company had shipped too much water in its LCA and dropped

out of formation, landing near the Laurent-sur-Mer Exit at 0900 hours, after being transferred to an LCT.

On signal of the Battalion Commander, the leading troops scrambled over the wall, blew gaps in the protective barbed wire, and protected by the rising smoke, advanced to a point near the top of the hill, where the smoke had cleared and the hill was being swept by enemy automatic fire. First Lieutenant Francis W. Dawson of Company "D", led his platoon over the top and eliminated an enemy strongpoint, enabling the entire battalion to advance. Here, minefields became as prevalent as bees on a honeycomb, and the battalion had to change into a column formation, winding in and out of those formidable, hidden defenses, Company "B", the leading unit, reached the St. Laurent sur Mer-Vierville sur Mer road at a point approximately one kilometer East of Vierville sur Mer. In the course of this advance, many Germans, well concealed in weapons pits constructed in the hedgerows, were killed. The Battalion advanced toward Vierville sur Mer, "B" Company leading and receiving heavy sniper and machine gun fire. "E" Company, attempting a penetration to the South, was stopped by intense machine gun fire. "C" Company fired an 81 MM Mortar concentration, knocking out several of the positions, but they were replaced so quickly that "E" Company was forced to abandon its Southern attack. Several direct artillery hits on the rear of the battalion column, caused many casualties.

All pressure was exerted to take Vierville sur Mer, and after overcoming considerable sniper fire, the battalion advanced through the town to its western outskirts where heavy resistance was encountered. Dusk was all too quickly turning into darkness, and the battalion, together with three companies of the Second Ranger Battalion, part of the First Battalion of 116th Infantry and 743rd Tank Battalion set up a perimeter defense for the night.

One platoon of Company "A", which had been separated from the battalion during the crossing of the Sea Wall, proceeded through the town to the rallying point SW of town, ar-

iving with 12 Prisoners and Killing at least that many more Germans. Leaving the rallying point, the platoon fought its way to Point du Hoe, the battalion objective, and contacted the Second Ranger Battalion.

The platoon of "F" Company, which landed near St. Laurent-sur-Mer, encountered heavy artillery and machine gun fire. Numerous patrols were sent out in an attempt to contact the battalion, but failed. This unit then attempted to move along the beach toward Vierville sur Mer, but after advancing 600 yards, receiving artillery fire which inflicted eight casualties, found themselves pinned down by a far superior force, and darkness found the platoon in this position.

"D" Day, 6 June 1944, was over, and the Rangers took count; 100 PWs taken, 150 Enemy killed and approximately 60 Rangers killed or wounded. On tomorrow and the days to follow, the enemy would pay heavily for those 60 Rangers, — and as time proved, the enemy never stopped paying.

"D" plus one, 7 June 1944, and plans were made for enlarging the beach-head and for relieving the three companies of the Second Ranger Battalion on Pointe du Hoe. They started out at 0600 hours, a force composed of "C" and "D" Companies of our battalion, 80 men of the Second Ranger Battalion, 150 men of the 116th Infantry and six tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion, advancing toward Pointe du Hoe. This force reached the outskirts of St. Pierre du Mont where for eight hours, without respite, it received a heavy artillery bombardment. At nightfall, they assembled in St. Pierre du Mont, and under cover of darkness, sent out a two man patrol to contact the Second Rangers on Pointe du Hoe. Contact was made and this two man patrol layed a wire between the two forces, establishing contact. The two Rangers who accomplished this feat, were Sergeants Moody and McKissick. In later operations, Moody was killed and McKissick was seriously wounded.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Fifth Rangers improved the

beachhead. Company "B", attacking SW toward Vierville sur Mer, knocked out several machine gun nests and numerous snipers. One platoon each of Companies "A" and "F", supported by four tanks, attacked South from the town, eliminating snipers, machine gun nests and several enemy combat patrols. This force killed approximately 25 enemy and captured 85 PWs. During the night, enemy snipers infiltrated back into the town and "E" Company had to ferret them out once more. A determined enemy counter attack on the town was also repulsed and smashed by "E" Company.

"A" Company, on Pointe du Hoe, assisted the Second Rangers in repulsing three counter attacks. These Germans were determined to throw the invading force back into the ocean, — as determined as the Rangers were to stay, — but we stayed.

One platoon of "F" Company, in an inland attack, destroyed three enemy pillboxes and several weapons emplacements, killing eight Germans and capturing 36. Major Street of Admiral Hall's staff, contacted this platoon, and transported them in an LCPV to Pointe du Hoe, where they contacted the Commanding Officer of the Second Rangers. An eight man patrol was sent out to contact the Fifth Ranger Battalion, this time successfully, as they got through to St. Pierre du Mont.

"D" plus one ended, found the Fifth Rangers with 150 PWs and 80 enemy killed. to add to their tally. However, not without losses, 40 more Rangers were added to the list of killed and wounded.

At 0600 hours of "D" plus 2, the Rangers prepared to move to Pointe du Hoe. Companies "B" and "E", with the mission of taking and holding the Sluice Gate at Grandcamp les Bains, advanced through the low ground South of the East-West road, into Grandcamp, at 1000 hours. The town appeared to be deserted, — certainly a welcome relief after finding so much resistance contesting every yard of their advance, since the first landing on the beaches of France. But the elation was short-

lived, for when the leading elements were within 25 yards of the Sluice Gate Bridge, heavy Machine Gun and Mortar concentrations pinned them down. The two companies were forced to take up a new position on the high ground East of the Sluice Gate Bridge, where they joined Company "D" who had just returned from Pointe du Hoe. With the initial positions taken by the Rangers, a force of two battalions of the 116th Infantry supported by tanks, artillery and naval gun fire, passed through the Ranger positions and captured the town of Grandcamp les Bains. "D" and "E" Companies took up the defense of the Bridge and mopped up positions along the coast toward Pointe du Hoe.

"C", "D", a platoon of "F" Company and a platoon of "A" Company and the three companies of the Second Rangers moved on to Pointe du Hoe, meeting no resistance, and contacted the Second Rangers and other platoons of "A" and "F" Companies. But here, on Pointe du Hoe, one of those unfortunate, seemingly unavoidable incidents of War, occurred. A Battalion of the 116th Infantry and tanks of the 743rd Tank Battalion, who were attacking Pointe du Hoe, from the SW, caught the Rangers in their fire and inflicted six Rangers casualties, among them, two killed.

Next morning, Companies "A", "C" and "F" were given the mission of cleaning out the strongpoint of batteries at Maisy. They were supported by two halftracks of the Second Rangers and a company of the 81st Chemical Weapons Battalion. The mission was a successful one, and three 105 Howitzers, numerous small arms and large stocks of ammunition and food were captured. In addition, approximately 90 PWS were taken.

That night, the entire Battalion assembled in a bivouac area West of Osmanville.

Tally for these two days, "D" plus two and "D" plus three, showed 40 Enemy killed, 165 PWs and 28 Ranger casualties.

At 0430 hours, next morning, the Luftwaffe bombed the bivouac area, and we lost three more Rangers.

At 0830 hours, Companies "C", "D" and "F" jumped off to

clean up the coastal fortifications from Grandcamp les Bains to Isigny. They met little resistance, and in seven hours, returned with approximately 200 PWs. Patrols in the vicinity of the Battalion Area added 35 more prisoners to this total. Our casualties for the fifth day of fighting, — six Rangers.

The Invasion Operations of the Fifth Ranger Battalion were over, but would never be forgotten. The many individual incidents that will long be remembered, — the numerous individual examples of heroism, — the thousands of things that took place and are always discussed when Rangers get together, — all of that can not be told here; there are far too many. Perhaps the attached "Unit Citation", can tell it more clearly; — perhaps later history will emphasize the important role that was played by the Rangers in the Invasion of France; — or perhaps it is better understood in the words of General Cota, when on the early morn of June 6th, he said, "LEAD THE WAY RANGERS"!!

EXTRACT

GENERAL ORDERS

WAR DEPARTMENT

No. 73

Washington 25, D. C., 6 September 1944.

II. BATTLE HONORS. — 1. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (sec. I, Bull. 11, WD, 1943), superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1942), citation of the following unit in General Orders, No. 36, Headquarters 1st Infantry Division, 13 July 1944, as approved by the Commanding General, First U. S. Army, is confirmed under the provisions of section IV, Circular No. 333, war Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

The 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action. In the invasion of France the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion was assigned the mission of securing a sector of the beachhead. As the leading assault unit in this sector the battalion landed on the beach at H-hour on D-day. This landing was accomplished in the face of tremendous enemy rifle, machine gun, artillery, and rocket fire. In addition, the battalion encountered mines and underwater and beach obstacles. Refusing to be deterred from its mission of securing a beachhead, the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion faced concentrated enemy fire and hazardous beach obstacles with determination and gallantry. Although subjected to heavy enemy fire during the entire day and despite numerous casualties and fatigue, the courage and esprit de corps of this battalion carried the enemy positions by nightfall, thereby securing the necessary beachhead without which the invasion of the continent could not proceed. The heroic and gallant action of the 5th Ranger In-

fantry Battalion in accomplishing this mission under unusual and hazardous conditions is in keeping with the highest traditions of the service.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

OFFICIAL:

J. A. ULIO

Major General

The Adjutant General

G. C. MARSHALL

Chief of Staff

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

V

RESPIRE

The next few weeks that followed the Invasion Operations, proved to be a temporary relief. The movements of the Battalion took it to Bois Du Molay, Colombiers, and then to Fourville, where the Rangers took charge of a Prisoner of War camp. Then to Flamanville, France, where the Rangers had the mission of guarding the beach against possible counter-invasion by the Germans who were on Jersey and Guernsey Islands.

While patrolling, the Rangers suffered many casualties, as the beach had been thoroughly mined by the enemy. However, up to the time that the Rangers left Flamanville, no counter-invasion took place, — though several months later, the Germans on the Channel Islands did raid a French Port and take prisoners.

These weeks were also used for acquiring and training replacements; — replacements that volunteered to join the Rangers and who had to measure up to the high standards set forth. Every effort was put forth to make real Rangers of these men, in this time without the benefits of Camp Forrest, Fort Pierce, Scotland or the Assault Training Center of Branton, England. But with the spirit, physical and mental qualifications, these men, in a short time, became Rangers, — and the original Rangers accepted them as such.

Movements again, and this time to St. Martin Bonfosse, Bauis, Germain, Mayenne and finally Tragarantec, where the Rangers were supplied and prepared for the coming campaign, — "Brest".

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

VI

BREST

Brest, France, — truly a chapter in Ranger History, for it was one of the longest, most difficult and costly campaigns of the War, for the Fifth Ranger Battalion. At Brest, the Rangers found the best soldiers of the German Army, among them the fanatic Second Parachute Division, and one of Germany's best Commanding Generals, — Remcke.

Brest was a network of Forts and Pillboxes, a city so well fortified that it was considered impregnable, — by the Germans, — not by the Rangers. But it did prove a "hard nut to crack", and the Fifth Ranger Battalion, though a small unit, played a role many times its size in the capture of that Port.

The Battle for Brest began for the Rangers, on 29 August 1944, with an order from the Commanding General of VIII Corps, attaching two Ranger companies to the Second U. S. Division, for operations. "A" and "C" Companies drew the assignment, under the command of Major Heffelfinger, (then Captain), the Ranger Executive Officer.

These two companies relieved a company of the 23rd Infantry, and took up position overlooking Pyrotechnic De St. Nicholas, securing the left flank of the 23rd Infantry and protecting the Guipavas-Brest road.

Company "E" moved to Gousneau relieving a company of the 9th Infantry and was assigned the mission of keeping contact between the 2nd and 8th U. S. Infantry Divisions, and contact was made hourly.

Next morning, Company "E" received a determined enemy counterattack, and repulsed it with just eight casualties. After

being thrown, back, the enemy rained a heavy concentration of artillery into "E" Company's areas and depleted "E" Company's strength by four more casualties.

"A" Company was drawn up beside "C" Company, and together they formed a defense area for the Guipavas-Brest road. This area was subjected to constant long range machine gun fire. One platoon of each of these companies, moved to a position to protect a Heavy Machine Gun platoon of the 23rd Infantry, from enemy infiltration up the draw, and ran patrols to a company of the 23rd Infantry Division to keep contact. During the night, this force received harassing artillery fire, but suffered no casualties. However, next day, one of the patrols clashed with the enemy and added two Rangers to the casualty list.

Up to this point, the mission of the Rangers had been purely defensive, so few enemy were killed or captured.

On the afternoon of 1 September 1944, the remainder of the Fifth Ranger Battalion received orders attaching it to the 29th Infantry Division, to join in the Battle for Brest. The Command Post at Tregarantec was closed and the battalion moved into a bivouac area, that evening. Patrols sent out to determine the disposition of the enemy and secure the bivouac area, returned with three prisoners, but paid for them with three Ranger casualties. An enemy force had been encountered, but withdrew.

Two patrols, led by Captain Gawler, (then 1st Lt.), of "C" Company, and Lt. Walker, "A" Company, made a successful reconnaissance of Hill 105, captured three prisoners and killed at least three others. The two companies were then attached to the 38th Infantry, where they conducted a reconnaissance in force of Hill 90, under heavy sniper and Machine Gun fire. On 4 September 1944, "A", "C" and "E" Companies were relieved of their attachments and rejoined the battalion.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the battalion had been given the mission of moving South to gain contact with the 116th Infantry Regiment and straighten the front lines. "F" Company

protected the battalion flank while "B" Company seized the high ground and "D" Company moved forward and prepared to hold the ground. The mission was accomplished rapidly, against little enemy resistance.

The second platoon of Company "B", led by Lt. Gombosi, was then ordered to make a reconnaissance in force of the draw, and to make this possible, the first platoon of "B" Company, led by Lt. Askin, was to move to a Road Junction near the draw and upon signal, attack South. In addition, one platoon of "D" Company was to follow Lt. Askin. As this platoon approached the Road Junction, it ran into stiff resistance but proceeded South as ordered. Meanwhile, Lt. Gombosi and his platoon were in position just outside one of the forts, and observing no enemy within, requested permission to attack and capture it. Permission was granted, and he moved forward, slowly, going from dug-out to dug-out, toward the heart of the fort. It was nearly half an hour before he found an enemy, but here, the daring and cockiness of a handful of Rangers was not enough, as they found the enemy outnumbering them ten to one. They were forced to withdraw, while the battalion reserve platoon came to their aid. Meanwhile, Lt. Askin's platoon had advanced 500 yards South, but was ordered to withdraw to the Road Junction. Night was falling, and with the only battalion reserve committed, enemy counter-attacks were being received in every position. It was a dangerous situation, and help was needed, so Lt. Col. Sullivan, (then Major), Battalion Commander, radioed to the rear echelon for every available Headquarters Ranger to be sent to the front, at once. This was not a new experience for Headquarters, however. They had landed with the first waves on "D" Day, had fought through the entire Invasion Operations, and as time would tell, from that time on, they were always under fire with the other Ranger companies. Headquarters Company was constituted into a Ranger Company, for use wherever needed.

With Headquarters Company in position as Battalion Reserve, the Rangers prepared to attack the Fort. "F" Company held its

position on the flank, -- "B" Company attacked the Fort from the North, -- "D" Company followed "B" in column at about 500 yards. The attack was preceded by an air attack. First try and the fighter bombers missed the target by 400 yards. Lt. Gombosi moved down the draw to begin his attack. The planes tried again and missed, and the attack had to be called off. The next time that the air was to attack, it was agreed to use Purple Smoke to mark the target. By this time, Lt. Gombosi was in position. Eight P-47s flew over the target as three dud shells from the artillery hit the target. In desperation, White Phosphorus Shells were used, marking the target perfectly, and the Air Corps struck, -- sixteen direct hits on the Fort. "B" Company commanded by Captain Pepper (then 1st Lt.), began its attack. The planes came back three times and strafed. -- the last time with Lt. Gombosi and his platoon less than one hundred yards from the Fort. As the planes came back and strafed again, Lt. Gombosi and his platoon, followed closely by the first platoon, rushed into the smoke and dust, less than twenty yards from the ricocheting bullets. Six minutes later, the Fort was reported captured. 247 Prisoners were taken from the Fort, including five officers, -- and by just 60 Rangers. "B" and "D" Companies wheeled to the East and took up positions overlooking the draw.

Next day, "F" Company seized some high ground, while "D" Company and Headquarters began to attack South to seize another Fort. After a two hour assault, the Fort was taken, yielding more than 300 Prisoners to "D" and Headquarters Companies.

"F" Company fought ahead to occupy more ground by midnight, and the days fighting ended with 320 Prisoners taken and approximately 150 enemy killed, as against fifteen Ranger casualties.

Next day, 5 September 1944, with a platoon of Company "A", 644th TD Battalion, the Rangers attacked again. "B" Company attacked the next Fort, while "F" Company supported with a covering fire. However, "B" Company was heavily counter-at-

tacked on the left flank, and a slight withdrawal was necessary. "F" Company seized the situation and attacked across the ravine, while the TDs fired into and took the pillboxes in the opposite Fort. "F" Company then finished off the attack with a bayonet charge that turned German blood into ice, and the Fort was captured.

But again the situation became critical. As "F" Company was heavily engaged with the enemy, our own planes bombed them, the concussion tossing men up in the air. But in times of stress, a good leader thinks quickly, and the situation was taken in hand. "A" Company was sent through "B" Company's position to relieve "F" Company on the South, while "E" Company swung around and came to "F" Company's rescue from the West, and positions were held and counter-attacks repulsed. The Germans paid for that day's activities with seventytwo prisoners and 100 killed, against Ranger casualties which numbered only eighteen.

Next morning, all companies advanced to the ravine, killing 50 enemy and capturing 39, against an unbelievable figure, -- one Ranger casualty.

All night of the 6th and all day of the 7th, the Command Post was being heavily shelled by 203MM and 40 MM flak which wounded one Ranger and damaged three vehicles.

"B" and "F" Companies were left in their positions, and the remainder of the Battalion, including Headquarters and the Command Post moved out. Marching to Loch Marie Plouzane, the Battalion entrucked for a new area, getting as far as possible on the trucks and then marching again, to an assembly area preparatory to an attack on Le Conquet. The route of the trucks brought the Rangers under the eyes and guns of the enemy on Crozon Peninsula, but passage came safely, and the guns of Crozon did not bother the Rangers until later in the Brest Campaign. However, the assembly area was entered under the fire of mortars and flak, but without casualties. The Command Post was placed only a few hundred yards from the enemy.

Under cover of darkness, the Rangers moved out to occupy positions as far forward as possible, without digging in, as they were so close to the enemy positions that a snapped twig would have brought on a murderous mortar barrage. Patrols were sent forward to reconnoiter the ground ahead, that would be used in the morning. Headquarters furnished security for the Command Post Area, and the stage was set for tomorrow's play, "The Assault on Le Conquet".

Next day and the day that followed, artillery answered artillery, — patrols went out and cleaned up enemy pockets of resistance, and the companies advanced under withering machine gun fire. Company "E" led the assault on seven enemy concrete emplacements and took 130 prisoners, while a patrol of "C" Company, under command of Captain Gawler, (then Lt.) went out and took 40 prisoners. The TDs softened up the West coast of Le Conquet and La Mon Blanche, and then the attack came. "E" and "A", supported by two TDs entered the town from the South, while Company "C", supported by two TDs entered the town from the East. Two hours after the attack had begun, Le Conquet fell, yielding 96 prisoners.

The grimness of War seems to be spotted by comedy, and in this case it was the FFI (Free French Underground) who furnished the amusement. They had waited outside the town until it was taken, and as soon as the town surrendered, they went marching into the town, tipping their caps, bowing and "Bon-Jour-ing", while the French Civilians cheered them for performing the liberation.

Next day saw the fall of La Mon Blanche, and a plan to make a crossing of the channel with rubber boats, proved unnecessary. The Air Corps bombed the town and the artillery found its mark, so that the Rangers had an easy time of it and suffered only seven casualties to take 130 prisoners and kill five enemy.

With another phase of the job finished, the battalion moved

back to the area being held by the "B" and "F" Ranger Companies and then to a position from which they were to attack Le Cosquer. "B" and "C" Companies were attached to the 29th Division Reconnaissance Troop and in their operations with them, captured a pillbox and took about forty prisoners. The rest of the battalion attacked Le Cosquer, with "D" Company dominating the assault. The assault men of "D" Company advanced across the open ground, so rapidly that many of the enemy were killed in their foxholes, and they entered the town, first. The town was mopped up and 215 prisoners taken, with but fifteen Ranger casualties for the day. Another misfortune, as our own artillery shelled the town after the Rangers had taken it.

Further ground was taken, and "E" Company took a pillbox, capturing 35 prisoners.

17 September 1944 found the Rangers preparing to assault fortified positions around Fort Du Portzic. At 1500 hours, Lt. Aust, with a platoon of "E" Company, attacked one of five pillboxes South of Le Cosquer, with the TDs furnishing covering fire. The platoon placed a 40 lb charge of C-2 in the vision embrasure of the pillbox, and three minutes before the charge was blown, a heavy mortar barrage fell in the area surrounding the pillbox, — 200 rounds in two minutes, killing two Rangers and wounding a third. The charge was blown successfully, though it had no visible effect on the pillbox. These fortifications were built to withstand the heaviest attacks, and they were doing their jobs well.

However, Colonel Sullivan had another plan and at 2140 hours that night, Captain Green (then 1st Lt.), led an "E" Company patrol of eleven men up to the pillbox again. This time, they carried two 40 lb. C-2 charges, a 50 lb C-2 charge, Beehive type, and twenty gallons of a gasoline and oil mixture. The charges were placed and the mixture poured over the pillbox, while the artillery and TDs covered the patrol's activities. All the other Rangers waited and watched, as every gun stop-

ped firing when the patrol reached the box. Everyone waited, — waited to see if the enemy would discover the patrol and open fire, — waited to hear the explosion and watch the pillbox burn, — waited to see if the new solution would penetrate the thick concrete and steel of the pillbox. The explosion came at 2210 hours, and the burning pillbox lit the sky for forty minutes. The long silence had broken and every man on the patrol returned safely.

At 0200 hours, next morning, a patrol from "A" Company went out to try for a second pillbox, but the Germans had posted heavy machine guns outside the boxes and the Rangers could not get close to the box.

Next morning, 18 September 1944, all Brest surrendered, and the pillbox that Captain Green's patrol had blown, was inspected. The box had been thoroughly destroyed, and the bodies of seventeen Germans were found inside. Prisoners taken from adjacent installations, stated that the effect of the explosion had been so demoralizing that all personnel had remained awake and alert for the entire night. They believed that a flame thrower had been used, accompanied by oil bombs.

Another campaign had been completed, — another job well done, as is indicated by the Commendations that followed. In the Battle of Brest, the Rangers had captured 2114 Prisoners, killed 624 enemy and suffered 137 Ranger casualties, — some of whom rejoined the Rangers for later operations, — others who never returned.

HEADQUARTERS, 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION

A. P. O. NO. 29, U. S. ARMY

"29 LET'S GO"

18 September 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 5th Ranger Battalion.
(THRU: Commanding General, VIII Corps)

1. I desire to commend you and the members of your Battalion for superior participation in active combat while attached to this Division during the period 1—18 September 1944, culminating in the capture of the City of Brest.

2. Without exception, your Battalion has taken all of its objectives quickly and with minimum losses. Throughout your cooperation and enthusiasm has been of the highest class. The outstanding examples of prompt aggressive action were the capture of the Fort Pt. Minon and Fort De Mengaht.

C. H. GERHARDT,
MAJOR GENERAL, U. S. ARMY,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS VIII CORPS

20 September 1944

MEMORANDUM:

TO : All Units, VIII Corps.

The following TWX from Lieutenant General William H. Simpson, Commanding General, Ninth United States Army, is published for the information of all officers and men of the VIII Corps:

"To Commanding General, VIII Corps. Extend to all officers and men of your command my hearty congratulations upon the occasion of the capture of Brest. It has been a long difficult fight, and I feel they have done a magnificent job. I wish to convey to you my own personal expression of praise for the fine soldierly manner in which you and all units of your Corps have accomplished your mission. Fine work. There is good hunting ahead as we crush the last of German resistance. Signed Simpson."

By command of Major General MIDDLETON:

CYRUS H. SEARCY,
Colonel, G. S. C.,
Chief of Staff

NOTE

Recommendation for the award of an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Unit Citation has been presented to higher headquarters, by the Commanding General of the 29TH INFANTRY DIVISION, for the Fifth Ranger Battalion (less Companies "A", "C" and "E"), for its accomplishments in certain phases of the "Battle for Brest".

The actual award of this cluster, has not been made official, up to the present date, but is definitely expected to become official in the very near future.

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

VII

BELGIUM

With "Fortress Brest" having toppled, the Rangers went on the move again. After pausing temporarily in Plouneventer and Landerneau, France, the Rangers climbed aboard the old French "40 and 8" box cars, and for four days travelled Hobo fashion. It was a most uncomfortable trip, but everyone took it in good spirits. With the feeling of recently won victories, the Rangers spent the trip speaking of every little phase of the "Battle for Brest", and they spoke too, of the Rangers they left behind, — spoke of them as though they were still with us and would fight again.

On 2 October 1944, the Rangers arrived at the French Border town of Longuyon, where they entrusted for a bivouac area outside Arlon, Belgium. After ten days, they moved to Differt, Belgium, six kilometers outside of Arlon, into a Seminary. It can generally be said that some of the happiest days of the Rangers were spent there. The Rangers affectionately called it, "Boys Town", and as the Red Cross girl, whom we knew only as Kay, put it, "Rangers in a Seminary, — Imagine!!"

The Rangers began their visits to the city of Arlon, shortly after its liberation, and they were received with all the emotion and sincerity of a grateful people. Every Ranger was coaxed into a Belgian home, and he ate home cooked meals and forgot the War for a few weeks. For the first time since the Rangers left the States, they ate ice cream, pies and pastries and had good beer. At the Seminary, there was a movie every night, and the Rangers enjoyed their well earned recreation. With it all, they trained intensively, while replacement volun-

teers were brought in to fill the gaps and some of the wounded returned from the hospitals, ready and willing to fight again.

Our mission at Differt, was to provide security for 12TH Army Group Headquarters, by keeping two companies on the alert at all times, ready to protect the Headquarters in case of enemy attack.

Just before the Rangers left the Seminary, the little village of Differt celebrated its liberation. First, Mass was held in the little chapel in Differt, for all Americans who died to liberate the French and Belgians. Then the celebration started, and every home had two or three Rangers at the dinner table, — a dinner which consisted of the finest foods, well prepared and served in the finest style, — and fine old wines were brought forth from places where they had been hidden from the Germans. There were soccer ball games between the Rangers and the civilians, in the afternoon, and at night, there was dancing at the village cafe. The Rangers had never received a finer reception than they had in Belgium, and on November 7th, when they left the Seminary, neither Rangers nor civilians were very happy about the parting.

The remaining days of November were spent in Toul and Nancy, France, where training continued and new men were taught to be Rangers, — for the next battle to come.

NOTE:

The following illustrations show the poster announcing the Soccer Ball Game between the Stockem, Belgium Champions and the Rangers, and also a reproduction of the flag that they presented to the Rangers.

P. S. — The Rangers lost the game.

worldwartwovet



worldwartwo

MATCH DE FOOTBALL
AVEC
**BLACK AND WHITE
STOCKEM**
LE CHAMPION DIVISION 1942-43-44
VS.
SELECTION AMERICAIN

*L'Argent Realizé de
Ce Jeu se Donnera
Aux Lens Qui Ont
Perdu les Maisons
à St. Leger.*

PARENT-6 FRB.
ENFANT-4 FRB.

J. EVENSON

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

VIII

DIESEN TO LUDWEILER

For their next mission, the Rangers became a part of General Patton's Third U. S. Army, and were further attached to the Sixth Cavalry Group for operations.

It was a cold, muddy December 1st when the Rangers moved out for their next campaign. "A" Company joined Troop "A" of the Sixth Cavalry Squadron at Longeville les St. Avold, — "D" Company joined Troop "B" of the Sixth Cavalry Squadron at an assembly area in the vicinity of St. Avold, — and the remainder of the battalion moved as far as Porcellette on trucks and then marched to Grunhoff. A five man patrol was sent out from Grunhoff to reconnoiter the town of Diesen, and that night, the battalion moved up, setting up the Command Post in Diesen.

Next morning, "B" and "E" Companies attacked, crossing the Diesen-Carling Road and advancing Northeast. "C" Company followed, one hour later, and the entire attacking force met scattered but stubborn resistance, and heavy artillery fire bursting in the tree tops, hindered but could not stop the advancing Rangers. That night, Company "C" moved into position, contacting Company "C" of the Tenth Infantry on its left and Company "E" on its right.

Meanwhile, Company "D", after a brief reconnaissance of L'Hopital, attacked the town under the supporting fires furnished by Sixth Cavalry's Troop "B" and a Cannon Company of the Tenth Infantry. The Rangers advanced despite the heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire, but ran into very determined resistance in the center of the town, and since they had no ar-

tillery support, they were forced to hold fast. A heavy, outnumbering enemy counter-attack forced the Rangers to fall back 500 yards, but there they held, after suffering twenty Ranger casualties and killing thirty Germans.

Company "A" was used by Company "A", Sixth Cavalry Squadron, to reinforce the line along the woods South of L'Hopital. Their attack had been called off, as the Cavalry guides had become lost.

For the first day of fighting, the Rangers sustained thirty-five casualties, took eight prisoners and killed approximately sixty-five Germans.

Next morning, the enemy hit Ranger Company "B" with a heavy counter-attack, but "B" held its ground and the enemy paid for its folly with twenty-eight killed, thirty wounded and one prisoner.

"F" Company then attacked the town of Lauterbach, advancing across open ground, under a hail of mortar and small arms fire. The first assault wave left the woods on the run, across the open fields toward the town. They were exposed to enemy observation from the high ground to the front and on both flanks. 200 yards from the town's edge, this wave came under the unmerciful machine guns of the enemy, one machine gun firing from an emplacement on the left and two firing from emplacements on the right. Here, a Ranger gave his life in exchange for that of his fellow Rangers, — gave his life in one of the greatest displays of courage, heroism and self-sacrifice and made his name a symbol of achievement to other Rangers. His name, — Leo G. Samborowski, Private First Class, a B. A. R. gunner. From an exposed position on the forward slope of a hill, he poured a full magazine burst into the two emplacements on the right, while his comrades found slight cover from the machine guns. Realizing that the greatest danger came from the emplacement on the left, he ran forward until he could train his gun directly on the open emplacement, and firing eight full clips of

ammunition, he eliminated the Machine Gun, while his comrades reached the houses on the edge of the town. The machine guns on the right flank fired at him until they killed him. Leo G. Samborowski was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, — Posthumously.

"F" Company reached the first six houses, where they had a constant fight with a Tiger tank that brought a wall down on Captain Reveille (then 1st Lt.) and six men, but they scrambled out of the house, unhurt. In the next house, Corporal Andrew (Pappy) Speir was having a private battle with the Tiger tank. He was firing at it with a Bazooka and it was firing back at him, point blank, tumbling him from his perch on the top floor of the house. Each time he scrambled back up, unhurt, to fire again, and this went on and on until some Ranger mortar men drove the infantry away from the tank, — and the tank retreated.

Meanwhile, "A" Company, waiting in the adjacent woods for an opportunity to cross into the town, directed artillery on the enemy tank and also knocked out an enemy Command Post. Then under cover of darkness, "A" Company was guided across the ground by non-coms of "F" Company under the very barrels of enemy machine guns, and into the town.

"C" Company attacked Northeast through Carling to contact Company "F". However, heavy, artillery, mortar and small arms fire held up "C" Company with eight casualties, and a patrol was sent through enemy lines to contact "F" Company. The patrol returned with sixteen prisoners, but did not contact "F" Company. An assault platoon was immediately dispatched to try again, but the enemy fire was impenetrable and the platoon failed.

"B" Company captured twenty-nine prisoners from an enemy platoon that got to its rear, and then progressed into Lauterbach to join "A" and "F".

Company "F" of Sixth Cavalry Squadron was unable to furnish effective supporting fire, because the mud made their tanks immobile, and the 602nd TDs met the same difficulties. These

were no days for tanks or vehicle warfare and it remained strictly a doughboy's fight.

The next town to fall was Carling. Company "E" met little resistance as the Rangers took the town and went on to coordinate with "B" Company who was poised outside the German barracks at Aspenhubel. Together they struck, clearing the Barracks area and taking nine prisoners.

"D" Company, however, met stubborn resistance in taking L'Hopital, and after advancing 400 yards, were forced to dig in South of the town, for protection against the heavy enemy mortar fire and small arms fire. Meanwhile, Companies "A", "B", "C" and "E" advanced in a zone of action which included the northeastern portion of L'Hopital and the woods bordering it. They met little opposition and contacted "D" Company and elements of the Sixth Cavalry Squadron. L'Hopital was taken and the entire battalion assembled and attacked toward Carlsbrunn, taking the town without resistance.

Plans were made to capture the Volklingen Factory, intact, by crossing the river at night, and taking the well-guarded factory by surprise. However, this plan was cancelled by the Commanding General of the Fifth U. S. Infantry Division.

The battalion remained in an assembly area in Ludweiler, Germany, conducting rehabilitation, keeping two companies alerted for use as a mobile reserve force for the Sixth Cavalry Group. Enemy action and the cold, muddy winter had caused the strength of the Fifth Ranger Battalion to drop dangerously near an ineffective figure.

On December 8th, "A" Company assumed a defensive sector with "C" Troop of the Sixth Cavalry Squadron, while "F" Company was attached to "B" Troop with a mission of containing and patrolling along a line to the Saar River. The remainder of the battalion was kept in Ludweiler as a reserve force. The two patrolling companies had minor clashes with the enemy and were constantly under heavy mortar and artillery barrages,

but suffered few casualties, while taking a respectable toll of enemy killed and captured.

On December 11th, Companies "C" and "D" relieved "A" and "F" and patrolling continued. On December 13th, the battalion moved to a new area at Ziegelhutte, Germany, and then to Stein-B, Germany, where the Rangers assumed responsibility for a new sector of the front lines. Ranger patrols kept contact between Ranger Companies and Cavalry, after meeting large enemy patrols and having brisk fire fights. The Ranger companies also set booby-traps for unwary Germans, as they were patrolling a Division size front with an understrength Ranger battalion. The booby-traps served nobly as they accounted for a number of very unhappy Germans.

On December 21st, a platoon each of Companies "C" and "D" faked an attack to draw the enemy's attention away from a raid objective. One battalion of medium artillery was thrown on the objective, followed by a battalion of light artillery that boxed in the target area on three sides, as a raiding party of Company "B" rushed in and killed twenty-eight enemy, wounded twenty-five and took one prisoner. The raiding party suffered one lightly wounded casualty.

On December 24th, the Rangers were relieved of their mission and moved to Metz, France, where Christmas was celebrated with Church Services and a huge dinner.

Tally for the campaign; — 106 prisoners taken,
143 estimated enemy killed
129 Ranger casualties.

HQ 6 CAV GP (MECZ) (REINF)
APO 403, US Army
28 Dec 44

SUBJECT : Appreciation of Services

TO : CO 5 Ranger Infantry Bn
APO 655, US Army

THROUGH: CG, Third US Army
APO 403, US Army

1. During the period 4 November to 24 December 1944, it was our pleasure and privilege to be associated together in the 6 Cavalry Group (Mecz) (Reinf), first for training, reorganization, and refitting, later in reserve for employment as a mobile force by the Third US Army, and on 30 November 1944 for employment in the general area KARLINGEN to the SAAR River under control of various commanders.

2. In the course of this period various problems were presented to the Ranger Bn. First, that of reorganization and refitting, second, of absorbing the principles and the practicing those principles of preparing to function as a part of a highly mobile force, requiring an adaption of training already conducted, and third, when committed to find ourselves in a rigorous, bitter, stubborn battle which taxed the ingenuity, initiative, and intelligence, lightly armed as we were, to overcome and conquer.

3. We won a decisive battle, it is said. We won, however, largely because the 5 Ranger Infantry Bn provided the stiffening and the backbone without which our light mobile forces would have been unable to accomplish the task assigned.

4. The flexibility of mind and thought which was brought to the problem of the mobile force and its operations, the willingness on the part of each man of the organization to do his part, and the enthusiasm and will to fight which each man of

your organization brought to the battle was an inspiration to all of us. It was a pleasure to be associated with you and it is with regret that we have lost your battalion from the force in its present assignment. It is to be hoped that at some future time we may again find ourselves serving together, fighting toward a common objective.

EDWARD M. FICKETT
Colonel, 6 Cav Gp (Mecz) (Reinf)
Commanding

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

IX

ST. AVOLD TO WEITEN

On 28 December 1945, the Battalion moved to St. Avold, where it was attached to the 95th Infantry Division and given the task of preparing defenses to block any enemy penetration in the vicinity of St. Avold. This was the period of the German Ardennes offensive, and according to information received from prisoners of War, the next attack was to come in the St. Avold vicinity.

The Battalion Commander, his staff and Company Commanders, after carefully reconnoitering the terrain, chose points from which to defend the city in case of an attack, and the companies dug into position. Ever since the Rangers crossed the beach on "D" Day, they had always wished for an opportunity to protect a strong point against enemy attack, vowing that they could really show the Krauts how it should be done, — and this looked like that opportunity. It must be confessed that the Rangers actually hoped that the Krauts would try to take St. Avold. But fortunately or unfortunately, the Rangers did not get their wish, — not in St. Avold. However, they did have that opportunity later in the year, at Zerf, and they definitely proved their point.

On January 1st, at 0315 hours, an alert came; an enemy attack of undetermined strength was taking place in the 106th Cavalry Group sector, and if the enemy could penetrate the Cavalry defenses, the Rangers in St. Avold would have to stop the advance. All units manned positions. However, the situation in the 106th Cavalry Group sector was clarified by 1000 hours and it proved to be a small counter-attack, easily repulsed by the Cavalry.

In the days that followed, a complete defense of St. Avold was established in every phase. Check posts were set up to screen the influx of civilians, both internal and external defense plans were written up and made familiar to all concerned, — the companies continued to improve positions and practice alerts were made regularly, many of which were observed by the Commanding General of the 95th Infantry Division and his staff. The practice alerts were executed with clocklike precision and if an attack should come, the Rangers would be ready.

But whether or not an enemy attack came, the time at St. Avold was not wasted, as reinforcements were being recruited and trained. On January 23rd, the Rangers were relieved of their St. Avold mission and moved to Johannesbannberg, France, there to continue training.

On 9 February 1945, the Battalion was attached to the 94th Infantry Division and moved to Wehingen, Germany. The Rangers prepared defensive positions for the area and established hourly patrols for flank contact. The Ranger front was approximately 11,000 yards long, so here again was brought into practice, the vigorous, aggressive Ranger patrols that deceived the enemy as to the size of the unit that was opposing them, and drove terror into their hearts whenever a Ranger patrol was encountered by them.

Patrolling continued until 19 February 1945, and the ground was thoroughly reconnoitered. Exact locations of mine fields were made and charted, dragons' teeth, Anti Tank ditches and enemy troop dispositions were located, until the Rangers were completely familiar with every foot of the terrain.

At 0600 hours of February 19th, "A" and "F" Companies attacked Northwest toward Oberleuken, Germany; "F" Company led, "A" followed, while a platoon of "B" furnished supporting fire. They attacked across the Anti Tank ditch, when the leading elements of "F" Company, already across the ditch, found themselves in the midst of an electrically controlled mine field, with

mines already bursting with volcanic fury, all around them. To make matters even more confusing, an unmerciful crossfire of enemy machine guns opened fire, sweeping the Anti Tank ditch and mine field. Needless to state, numerous casualties were suffered and neither Ranger Company was able to advance. Mortar was thrown in on the Rangers caught in the ditch, causing further casualties and death to many already wounded. The machine guns were found to be firing from well concealed pillboxes on either side of the ditch.

The platoon of "B" Company was also held up by heavy machine gun fire, and was unable to advance. "E" Company also attacked and succeeded in getting one platoon across the Anti Tank ditch, but there it too was stopped by heavy machine gun fire and mortar fire.

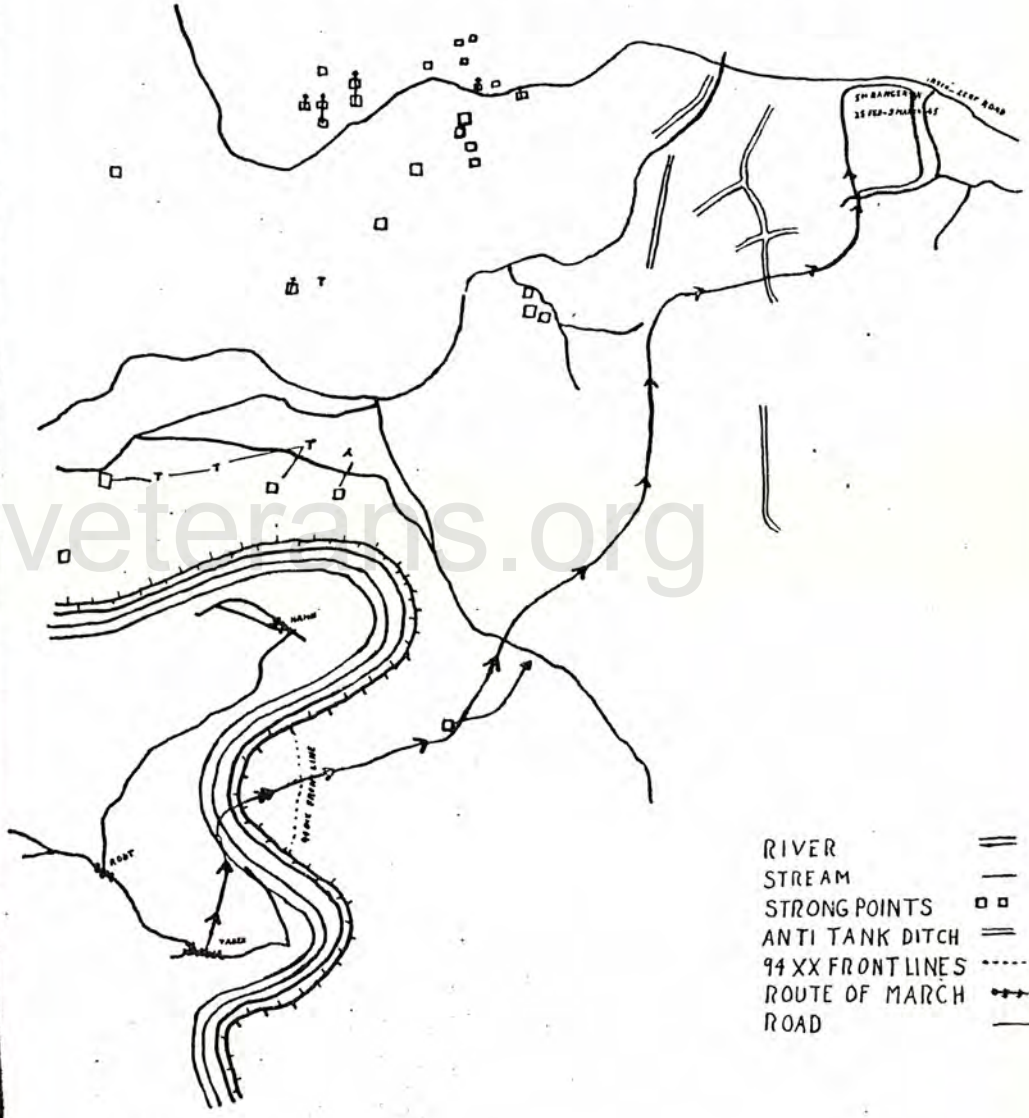
At 1700 hours that night, "A" Company moved from Oberleuken, which was now clear, to Hellendorf, where they attacked the pillboxes that were holding up "E" and "F" Companies. With lightening-like fury, the Rangers of "A" Company captured the pillboxes and took 40 prisoners out of them. "F" Company was moved out to join "A" in Oberleuken, while Companies "E" and "B" moved to defensive positions for the night. The day's fighting had caused 55 casualties against 40 enemy prisoners taken and twelve enemy killed. During the hours of darkness, some of the wounded Rangers were evacuated. All companies held defensive positions, and in the next two days, captured twenty prisoners.








February 21st, Companies "C" and "D" were attached to the Third Cavalry Squadron for operations, while the remainder of the battalion moved to Weiten, Germany, to outpost and protect the towns of Hamm, Taben, Keuchingen and Orcholtz.

On 23 February 1945, the battalion was ordered to assemble in Weiten. The Rangers had been given another mission, — and what mission!! They were to cross the Saar River at the 94th Division Bridgehead at Taben, and infiltrate through the

enemy lines and out the Irsch-Zerf road, thereby preventing the enemy from sending reinforcements down the only road that was available. The Tenth Armored Division's drive depended upon the Ranger's success, and the orders were "Cut the road at any cost". Here again, it was "LEAD THE WAY, RANGERS!!" — lead the way through virgin enemy territory until you find yourselves all alone, surrounded by the enemy, but holding the Irsch-Zerf road, — and hold no matter what the enemy throws at you, at any cost. Well, this was a job only for Rangers, — the type of job that men expected when they volunteered to become Rangers, — and they achieved their goal. The Rangers infiltrated through approximately four kilometers of the roughest terrain and heaviest fire that they had ever encountered, — and they did cut the road and hold it against unbelievable odds. But the phrase, "At all costs", was not just a phrase. When the Rangers were relieved of their nine day mission which was originally planned as a 48 hour one, they emerged with only 180 Rangers. The story of what took place in those nine days is told best in the chapter that follows, — a story of that action, written by the Ranger Public Relations Officer, First Lieutenant Raymond Herlihy. In it, the moods and reactions of individual Rangers are presented clearly and gives the surviving Rangers a picture of themselves, and also gives those readers who are not Rangers, an idea of the unchallengable courage and valor of these magnificent soldiers.

IRSCH - ZERF OPERATIONS



- RIVER 
- STREAM 
- STRONG POINTS 
- ANTI TANK DITCH 
- 94 XX FRONTLINES 
- ROUTE OF MARCH 
- ROAD 

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HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

X

ON THE GO — AGAIN

February 23rd at 1630 hours in the town of Weiten, Germany. An electrifying atmosphere prevailed the entire assembly area. The men were as restive as yearlings and indeed they should be. But a few hours previous, the six Ranger companies had been spread over an area of 11,000 yards when, bingo, the Battalion less "B" Company, received orders to assemble in Weiten as rapidly as possible. Immediately after orienting the relieving units, Companies "A", "E" and "F" struck out on foot while "C" and "D" had to be motored. The rumors of the impending job were numerous and varied, yet, despite their difference, all possessed one constant theme, "The job was to be a real Ranger one".

The men's doubts and wonderment were short-lived, for soon the mission was unravelled to all. In true Ranger conformity, the lowest private possessed as equal a knowledge as Colonel Sullivan, The Battalion Commander. It was to be a 48 hour job, to cross the Saar, infiltrate the enemy lines and cut the Irsch-Zerf road. Its importance was determined by the fact that it represented the nucleus for any German reinforcements and must be accomplished at any and all costs. The companies were to set off individually to "B" Company's position in the town of Rodt and were to be there by 1815 hours. Immediately, extra machine gun ammunition, AT mines, and one "K" and one "D" ration per man were issued. The men were advised to grab some hot chow and to travel as light as possible. The ensuing hustle and bustle of preparation was orderly and rapid and, shortly thereafter, the 5th Ranger Battalion shoved off — on

the go again —. Confidence and cockiness clothed and beamed on the face of each man, yet the grimness of their eyes acutely testified to their savvy that the job would be no picnic; and, subsequent events proved that to the hilt.

The latter soon bore evidence at Rodt which was under heavy artillery fire. All companies came through OK but Company "A" which suffered many casualties of which two were officers. Captain Parker of Big Stone City, South Dakota, "A" Company, placed Tech Sgts Rooney of Fairfax, Vermont, and Thomas of Kansas City, Kansas, in charge of the two platoons, and throughout, he never had occasion to regret his selection. At Rodt, the Battalion was held up for an initating two hours due to the artillery, and the fact that the other friendly units were utilizing the sole foot bridge. Finally at 2000 hours, the Battalion departed for the Saar, and, using the jitter-bugging foot-bridge, all Companies crossed under harassing artillery fire. To this day, the men often thank their lucky stars that the foot-bridge held up, for with that current, plus the load of each man, anyone falling in would have as much chance of safety as the proverbial "snow-ball in hell". Once across the river, the damnable, spirit breaking, and seemingly endless hill had to be climbed. Halts were occasionally in order to check our course, but mostly to give the men a chance to regain their breath. Despite the coolness of the evening, every man was drenched with his own sweat, and at length, after what seemed an endless climb and grind, all companies were assembled at the top of the hill. It was then exactly 2245 hours.

Here it became necessary to abandon our original plan due to the fact that the adjacent infantry had not advanced as rapidly as anticipated. No time could be wasted, however, and after a brief period of deliberation and of consualties amongst the company commanders, the Battalion moved off. A formation of two columns abreast was taken up, "C", "F" and "A" from front to rear on the left column and "D", "E" and "B" constituting a column on the right.

Passing through elements of 302nd Infantry Regiment and advancing on a 10° azimuth for nine consecutive hours thereafter, the battalion infiltrated through and behind the enemy lines. Nine consecutive hours of incessant ascent and descent of those bastardly, heavily wooded hills. Not knowing if your next step was to be greeted by a murderous welcoming Kraut fire. Nine consecutive hours of necessitous silence; each man hanging doggedly on the very breath of his pal in front, and each man desperately endeavoring to maintain that required silence and control. Everyone wondered if perhaps it was his carelessness and mishaps which precipitated the occasional moderate artillery and mortar fire. Here, in truth, was brought into play the stealth and acme of infiltration so painstakingly practiced, developed, and perfected in the States, England, the rugged hills of Scotland and on the Continent itself, from the early morn of June 6th, 1944. Labor, however, has its just awards; for the multi-colored hues of the dawn of February 24th found us definitely behind the Jerry lines. Then it was exactly 0735 hours.

After a reconnaissance patrol from "E" Company had checked our route of advance, the Battalion once again moved off — three companies abreast, "D", "E" and "C" from left to right, followed in column by "F", "B" and "A".

In our continued advance, every few hundred yards was heralded by sharp, brisk skirmishes which inevitably concluded in the same pattern, — more prisoners and a proportionate amount of killed and wounded. The best example ocured in an area later affectionately nicknamed "Bloody Gulch". In the advance, "D" Company on the left flank, encountered stiff opposition by a company size force. Captain Miller of Kenefic, Oklahoma, immediately sprang into action, issued the necessary orders, and the fight was really on. It was a fight such as soldiers dream of, rifles and machine guns only. No mortars and no artillery. After twenty minutes of steady firing, the remainder of what was then a German Company pulled out. It left in its wake, approximately 40 dead, 12 seriously injured, and 8 slightly wo-

unded. In addition, 18 prisoners were taken and we ourselves, suffered but two dead. Another striking incident in our advance, was when "A" Company captured a staff car containing a medical officer, an artillery officer, and three enlisted men. It was amusingly difficult to convince them that they were our prisoners, — particularly since the front lines were three and one half miles away.

The Gods, however, can't be tempted too often, for these skirmishes couldn't perpetually continue in the same fashion. This was concretely evidenced by the increasing artillery. Nevertheless, by constantly deviating from our true course to elude and puzzle all pursuers, we at length attained a strategic hill, but 3/4 of a mile from our objective. Here, a perimeter defense was set up and the men immediately dug in. Later that night, a patrol from "A" Company was sent out to investigate some nearby houses. It returned within a half-hour with the information that the houses were entirely unoccupied. Colonel Sullivan, Battalion Commander from Boston, Mass., decided to use those houses, and at 2200 the Battalion moved off. As the last company arrived, rifle and machine gun fire was received from a nearby pillbox and house. Immediately, a patrol from "F" Company under Lt. Jeffers, approached both points and engaged the enemy. Several Germans were killed and the houses were secured and outposted for the night. The men certainly enjoyed this opportunity to rest and eat, and most, thereafter, were soon locked in the arms of Morpheus.

The following morning at 0800 hours, the Battalion started off and arrived at its final destination a half hour later. We now had the Irsch-Zerf road definitely under our observation and fire. A Battalion defense was immediately prescribed; "E" Company to take up a position on the north, "D" and "F" on the right, facing east, and "C" on the left, facing West. "A" Company maintained its position in the rear, where previously it had secured two bunkers after a small fight. "B" Company had the job of guarding the prisoners, now totalling a respec-

tive 95, and were also eligible for reserve. The companies immediately planted their AT mines, and fortunately so, for, before noon, "E" Company's mines accounted for a German half-track. The same company shortly after, knocked out a TD by bazookas and captured a moderate amount of German walking wounded who were using the road as a route of evacuation.

Between the hours of 1545 to 1630 hours the enemy launched two strong counter-attacks. "A" Company on the South, after receiving a severe shelling, was immediately attacked by a force of 200 Germans and two tanks. Simultaneously "E" Company received a strong thrust from the Northeast by a force of 400 Germans, plus four tanks. Company "A" on the south, repulsed the attack after killing approximately 70 and captured 35 PWs. It had meanwhile been cut off from the remainder of the Battalion by small infiltrating groups, but managed to extract itself and regain contact with the rest of the battalion. "E" Company likewise repulsed its attack after inflicting severe losses on the enemy and capturing 40 PWs. In this attack, our artillery supplied by the 284th FA Battalion arose to heroic proportions. Never throughout did it fail us, and to the man, the 5th Ranger Battalion takes off its hat to those boys.

So, there we were, little matter now that our ammunition was at ebb low. Why should it matter? Were we not immovably entrenched at our final objective? Had we not thwarted any and all re-inforcement attempts? Moreover, had we not received the welcoming news that forward elements of the 10th Armored would shortly reach us? All this, with a minimum of casualties and approximately 200 PWs to boot. All the misery and pains were now but memories submerged in the joy and realization of a job well done. It was then in this indulgent frame of mind that the Rangers comfortably settled themselves in their fox-holes. Relief would soon arrive and they would move off — each man filled with a well-earned sense of pride. Truly, a job well, well done.

No one however, can predict the ways and methods of War.

The rumor of the 10th Armored proved to be premature and the impending relief would arrive possibly tomorrow. Our depleted stock of water, ammunition, food and radio now had to be very definitely considered. It was impossible to be attained by ground and only one other way was open — air. Not too long, thereafter, artillery liaison planes dropped our needs. Because of the intense small arms fire, these items were dropped from a height of 1500 feet. Consequently, a very small amount fell into the Battalion area and, to make matters worse, most of that which did, proved to be unusable. The remainder of the day was spent in improving our positions, while interdictionary artillery fire was placed on the Irsch-Zerf road, so as to deny its use to the enemy.

At 0300 hours that night, a strong enemy force estimated at 400 strong, supported by intense artillery and mortar fire again attacked "E" Company. A fierce fight raged and, although suffering heavy losses, the enemy managed to over-run several positions of "E" Company. Captain Greene, (then Lt.) C. O. of Company "E", decided to withdraw about 50 yards where they could regroup the available men and hold there. Hold there they did, although it meant asking for friendly artillery to fire continuously on the area formerly occupied by their company. Certainly we couldn't afford to lose what we had now — not after all we had endured. For this reason also, Company "D" called for friendly artillery to be placed all around its position, and though it meant a harrowing night for all, none regretted it. Several hours later at 0700, "F" Company attacked and regained the little ground we had lost during the night. Ground literally paved with dead Krauts piled in front of the dead Ranger fox-holes were ample proof that they had held to the bitter end and had made the enemy pay an exceptionally high price for their small and now lost gain.

The remaining morning was quiet and at 1200 hours, every Ranger heart was brightened by the appearance of a tank force from the 10th Armored. This, however, was not as bright as

it appeared. Their orders were to drive on to Zerf and we still had the job to hold off all forces from the East, South and West. We were still out on the limb and had no one but ourselves to depend on. The 48 hour job would now be a 72, if no infantry reinforcements appeared, that 72 would even stretch out. The remainder of the day passed quietly, but yet the men, realizing their danger, constantly improved their positions and slept whenever possible. Mist and fog were now appearing and ever growing denser. It made the approaching night ever eerie and threatening. Every man felt that Jerry would try to take advantage of such weather and hit us again. Despite their lack of success so far, they knew full well that no infantry reinforcements had reached us. They knew we were slowly but surely losing men and that, even at our first appearance, we were comparatively a handful. Certainly, all the odds favored them and opposed us. Their chances of success were improving; ours waning. If they could defeat us, who could prevent them from neutralizing that small task force of the 10th Armored and regain the Zerf road. They could then erase all our efforts and the situation would revert to that which existed before we appeared. They knew that and, better, we knew they knew it. That's why the men improved their positions and that's why every man was wide awake in his fox hole that night. We wouldn't be caught napping at any cost. Yet, the night passed on quickly with no action. The fog was more dense than ever. Why weren't they coming? Didn't the Germans always favor such weather for an attack? Yet it wasn't coming, but then IT DID COME. At 0700 hours it came — came when you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. But yet it shouldn't have come — at least not for them. For they were caught in the small arms fire and cross machine gun fire of "E" and "C" Companies and part of "A" Company. In no time at all, the morning air was filled with the unmerciful cries and screams of the Germans. The attack was almost over before it began. They suffered tremendous casualties and we gained 145 prisoners. Daylight arrived and looked down upon the dead bodies

of well over a hundred Germans. For the fourth straight time, we had lowered the limb on them and had already accounted for approximately 350 prisoners of war, plus several hundred killed and wounded. Interrogation of prisoners revealed that we had practically accounted for one complete battalion and part of another. Further interrogation revealed that they were good troops from the 136th Regiment of the Second Mountain Division; that they knew who we were, and their orders were to "account for in full, our Ranger Battalion". Well, as yet, they were far from successful, but we knew they wouldn't, stop trying. Our situation now dwindled down to more or less of a personal fight; — the Rangers against the Mountain boys. Well, we were on top so far and we meant to stay there. If they wanted us that badly, they would have to come and get us, but, they had better come fighting. We had arrived there the 25th and it was now the 27th, and we were still there. The remainder of that day passed off in relative quiet. They hit us with moderate artillery and SP fire, and, caused a few casualties, but in the main, things weren't as active as the early part of the day. Moreover, Colonel Sullivan, now decided to abandon our defensive policy and assume the offensive. South of us, was a very advantageous high ground which once attained, would be a feather in our caps. Preparations were made and the next day we would try to pull the trick.

February 28th 1945. Our 48 hour job was well over a hundred hours, now. We would like, we were even praying to be relieved, yet we knew that the higher-ups were doing their best. They would relieve us as soon as it was possible. Besides, we couldn't think of that right now, the attack was due soon. At 0900 hours, Lt. Harbin of Denison, Texas, "C" Company, took a very strong combat patrol out to feel out the enemy force occupying some houses in our zone of attack. Opposition was stiff for about fifteen minutes, but after being partially outflanked and influenced by our bazookas, all firing ceased and a total of 105 prisoners, including three officers, were taken. At 1130 hours, Companies "C" and "D" jumped off to secure the nose of the hill. The

terrain was heavily wooded with a steep climb all the way. Initially, the attack was unopposed — sniper and occasional machine gun fire. When about half way to their objective, they were suddenly we came with exceptionally intense artillery fire and rocket fire. These were different rockets than the men had ever met before and these men had become acquainted with rockets on "D" Day itself. Yet, these were seemingly something unknown. The concussion was tremendous and, combined with the artillery, inflicted heavy casualties. It halted the advance momentarily, but, soon both companies pushed steadily on, drove off or killed all the defenders and shortly, thereafter, gained the nose of the hill itself. After a few hours respite, Company "A" drew up abreast of "D" Company and both companies advanced rapidly with opposition again being majorly artillery and rockets. Those damn rockets seemed to never stop, nor however, did our men. 200 yards from the top of the hill, the attack was temporarily halted by intense, small arms and machine gun fire supported by SP guns. The enemy chose this moment to attack, but, once again they were repulsed with ten PWs being taken. Yet, our attacking force was not strong enough, so it was decided to dig in there. At dusk, "F" Company moved into position on the right of "A" and "B" Company, in between "C" and "D". Throughout the night, moderate artillery and those ever present rockets rained on the positions of all companies. From 1130 hours that day, the rockets had beaten down on the men, and both were now mutual acquaintances. Only, this was a kinship that carried with it nothing but blood and death, plus ever present anxiety and fear. Yet, not a man moved from his respective post; in the army parlance, they sweated it out and then sweated out some more. Cold facts can give you a better realization of just how much fire we received that night. There were 400 rounds of rockets, 600 rounds of 105 artillery and 65 rounds of artillery larger than 200 mm. This in addition to the nuisance patrols endeavoring to infiltrate through our positions and find our C. P. They were the least of our worries, and were hustled off to the tune of our MIs and BARs.

That night, Colonel Sullivan delegated "F" and "A" Company to shove off at dawn the following morning, and to seize the five pillboxes and all positions atop it. The other companies were informed of this impending attack, and throughout the night, every last man in the Battalion deliberated within himself, its chances of success. God alone knows how many prayers were said for it. It must succeed or else we would be sitting like a bump on a log in our present position. Its chances were good — we were to receive tremendous artillery support and the men knew that they could approach under this rolling barrage almost to the very pillboxes themselves. Well, enough of such reasoning, better snatch a little sleep. Tomorrow will tell the story.

And tomorrow did tell the story. At 0500 hours, March 1st, the artillery began and kept pounding away at the enemy positions for one sustained hour. The boys from "A" and "F" moved out fast, thanking their lucky stars for this artillery and moved under its protective cover as if it were an umbrella. The Germans never knew what came about — they were as puzzled as a KO victim of Joe Louis' punches. 30 minutes after they moved out, the report came back that they had gained their objective, capturing 105 Enlisted Men and 10 officers without suffering a casualty themselves. It seemed unbelievable to the Germans, that we could follow up the artillery so closely. Yet, these boys did and completely took them before they were actually aware of their presence. The remainder of the Battalion was as happy as pigs in mud — yet there was no time for waiting. The other companies were quickly sent up and a Battalion defense was inaugurated in no time at all.

Once again the spirits reigned high. We had the heights at our complete disposal and our chances of relief were ever brighter. The 10th Armored was successfully exploiting its breach and elements of 301st Infantry were definitely approaching us. Relief would no doubt be soon on hand and brother, we needed it; as yet Superman and Flash Gordon had not joined the

Rangers. We were tired — we were darn tired. Nothing on God's good earth held a more beautiful future for us than a place to sleep and rest. Everyone felt sure that we would soon be relieved — but not just yet. The remainder of the day was spent in ducking the artillery and the seemingly endless stream of rockets. We were all wondering just where they got all the rocket ammunition; they were expending it as freely as the do-re-mi of the drunken sailor. The ever small patrols were spotted during the day, but no large scale action. Suddenly, however, at about 1900 hours, the Jerries tried to take us again. This time they tried it without the help of artillery. The darkness of the night was exceptionally partial to infiltration and they apparently decided to try it. Within no time at all, the air was filled with beaucoup firing. The enemy particularly hit "B" and "C" Companies hard, and with large numbers. Some of the fox holes were over-run and often the men in their holes didn't know whether or not the man in the adjacent fox holes were Krauts or not. Captain Snyder of Alexandria, Virginia, and Captain Pepper of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Commanding Officers of "C" and "B", had to pull back their lines somewhat and hold there. Meanwhile, "A" and "D" Companies moved up from their former positions to strengthen the flanks. The firing continued solidly for about 25 minutes and then ceased as suddenly as it began. Every trigger finger was tense with readiness for the sign of any movement or ruse. Throughout the night, they remained that way until dawn itself showed that the Krauts had withdrawn. Once again, for the sixth consecutive time, they were knocked back on their heels. This time seemed to be the clincher, for never again did they try a large scale attack. Their losses now were really staggering and they had not in all their attempts, gained one substantial yard.

It would have been swell for our relief to arrive then, on that fine morning of March 2nd, but unfortunately it didn't. Nor on the third nor the fourth, but in the very first hour of the 5th. One o'clock that morning we pulled out. What had been a 48 hour job, multiplied itself into 220 hours — over nine days.

Indeed the amount of rest the men had during those nine days was practically negligible. Every day was but a repetition of the previous ones; up to the very minute we were relieved. Incessant artillery and rockets, and always the threat of attacks and the attacks themselves. Nine days of it but yet the men could certainly derive the greatest pride and satisfaction from their achievements. With a total of over what eventually totalled approximately 700 PWs, hundreds killed or wounded, they had accounted for the greater part of the 136th Regiment of the Second Mountain Division. Better yet, they played a stellar role in the break through which eventually asserted itself on the very east banks of the Rhine. We had paid for that remarkable feat with the many dead and wounded of our closest buddies — men who had become attached to us like our own kin-folk. Their loss is still poignant but each and every Ranger feels that they too, somewhere, are bathing in the well deserved praise and credit which has engulfed the Battalion from all sides. Better yet in the praise of the Battalion Commander, Colonel Sullivan and all the other officers, that, "They performed in a manner far surpassing their already high expectations and hopes". In all truth, a job well done — well done.

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

XI

MISSION OF GOVERNMENT

On 6 March 1945, the Fifth Ranger Battalion moved to Schwebsingen, Luxembourg, there to heal its wounds. A program of rest and rehabilitation was put into effect with a minimum amount of training. Colonel Sullivan began his search for reinforcements, in an effort to rebuild the battalion on the nucleus of the 180 Rangers. Passes to Luxembourg City and the Rangers' second home, — Arlon, Belgium, were issued daily, and the battalion was rapidly rebuilt.

During the first days in Luxembourg, Colonel Webb of the "Battle Experiences" section of ETOUSA, questioned Colonel Sullivan, his staff and officers and enlisted men of the battalion, on their experiences in the last campaign.

On 19 March 1945, the battalion began to move across Germany, first to Trier, then to St. Wendel, where training was pursued more intensively. "D" Company went back to Trier, where the Rangers were used to guard a Displaced Persons Camp and keep order in the town.

On March 31st, the Battalion moved to Friedberg, Germany, where it was made responsible for the Military Government of Friedberg and used to keep law and order in the town.

On April 4th, the battalion moved to Melsungen, — and on April 11th to Heyerod and then a series of missions of Military Government which took sections of the battalion to Erfurt, Gotha, Apolda, Weimar and Jena, Germany. Military Governments were set up and law and order established. In many cases, this proved to be a difficult job, as there was excessive looting by both

Germans and Displaced Persons. It was necessary to closely guard food warehouses, as Nazi propaganda had thoroughly impressed the German people with the idea that famine would exist when the Allies came. Woods surrounding the various towns were combed for German soldiers, many requiring small battles before the enemy would surrender, and a few Ranger casualties were suffered, — but a respectable number of prisoners were taken.

The Rangers proved that they could establish a Government and keep order in Germany, almost as well as they could defeat the enemy on the field of battle, — and it was one more job well done.

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

XII

THE LAST MISSION

On April 21st, 1945, the Rangers started out on their last mission. Companies "C", "E" and "B" under Colonel Sullivan, were attached to the Third Cavalry Squadron of Third Cavalry Group, for operations, and joined the Cavalry at Hersbruck. Companies "A", "D" and "F" under command of Major Heffelfinger, the Ranger Executive Officer, were attached to the 43rd Cavalry Squadron of Third Cavalry Group and joined them at Lienberg. The mission of the Rangers was to operate with the Cavalry, to ride all of the back roads and fields to capture bridges across the Danube River and allow the 71st Infantry Division to cross.

The column progressed rapidly, meeting only minor resistance and receiving a small amount of enemy artillery and small arms fire. The Rangers were perched precariously on the tanks, and in a rush of speed on the final stretch to the objective, one good bridge was captured intact. However, all of the other bridges had long since been blown. Minor casualties were suffered by the Ranger battalion, — but this mission was quite different from the usual Ranger missions.

With the mission completed, the Rangers were relieved from duty with the Third Cavalry Group and assembled in Wenzelbach.

On 6 May 1945, the Battalion moved to Pocking, Germany, and on the next day, the long awaited news was announced, — "GERMANY HAS SURRENDERED, UNCONDITIONALLY".

HEADQUARTERS
FIFTH RANGER INFANTRY BATTALION
APO 655, U. S. Army

6 June 1945

SUBJECT: First Combat Anniversary.

To: The Officers and Men, Fifth Ranger Infantry
Battalion.

On this, the First Anniversary of the initial combat action of this command, I desire to pass on to all personnel my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the superior cooperation and enthusiasm displayed by all in the fulfillment of our assigned tasks.

It is with sincere pride and joy I recall your heroic achievements of one year ago. In those days we had no tradition of our own, but we were imbued with the one thought; that of maintaining and bettering the records of all previous RANGER organizations. Today we review with pride our year of outstanding and victorious combat.

We have been honored by the award of a Distinguished Unit Citation. We are favored in having had another similar recommendation submitted which I feel sure will allow us a cluster to this high award. You have distinguished yourselves among all other soldiers by your battlefield performance. Your name as Rangers commands respect wherever you go. Above all we now have our own tradition, earned by your courage and forever sealed by the blood of your comrades.

We have been brothers throughout a long and difficult period. Let each of us now make a determined resolution to maintain our stern requirements of discipline and efficiency.

Regarding our future there is so far no available accurate information. You may be sure, however, that as any indication of our future actions arises; you will be immediately informed.

Again, Congratulations and may our motto, first expressed by Major General (then Brigadier General) Cota on Omaha Dog Green Beach, 6 June 1944 always be our guide.

"LEAD THE WAY, RANGERS"

RICHARD P. SULLIVAN
Lt. Col. Infantry
Commanding

NOTE

Recommendation of a second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Unit Citation has been made by higher headquarters. (For the Irsch-Zerf Campaign.)

HISTORY OF THE FIFTH RANGER BATTALION

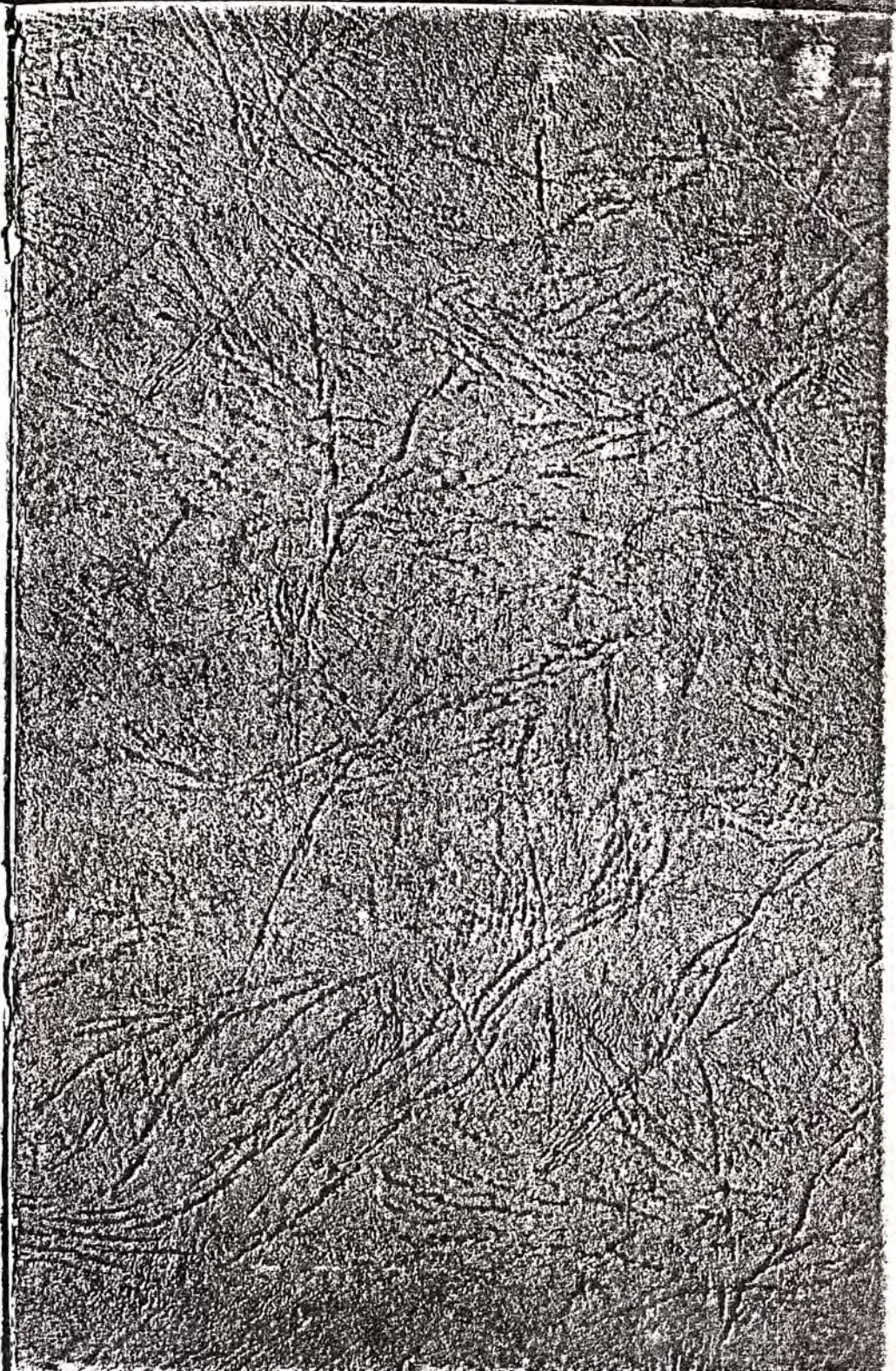
XIII

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With the end of fighting in Europe, the Rangers assembled in Ried, Austria. What next? They would have to wait and see. What were the possibilities? The Battalion could be used for occupation, sent to the United States to be disbanded or rebuilt and retrained, or sent to the Pacific Theater to continue the fight against the Japs. What did the Rangers want? To stay together as a Ranger Battalion, no matter what the mission or assignment, — to be able to re'turn to the United States as a unit, — the glorious Fifth Ranger Battalion.

What actually took place cannot be told, for this Historic Account of the Fifth Rangers was written at Ried, Austria, and this date, — 6 June 1945, we are still waiting, wondering and hoping.

F I N I S



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