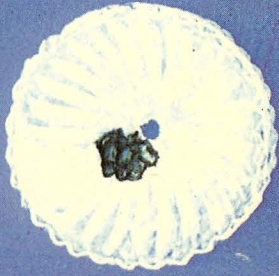
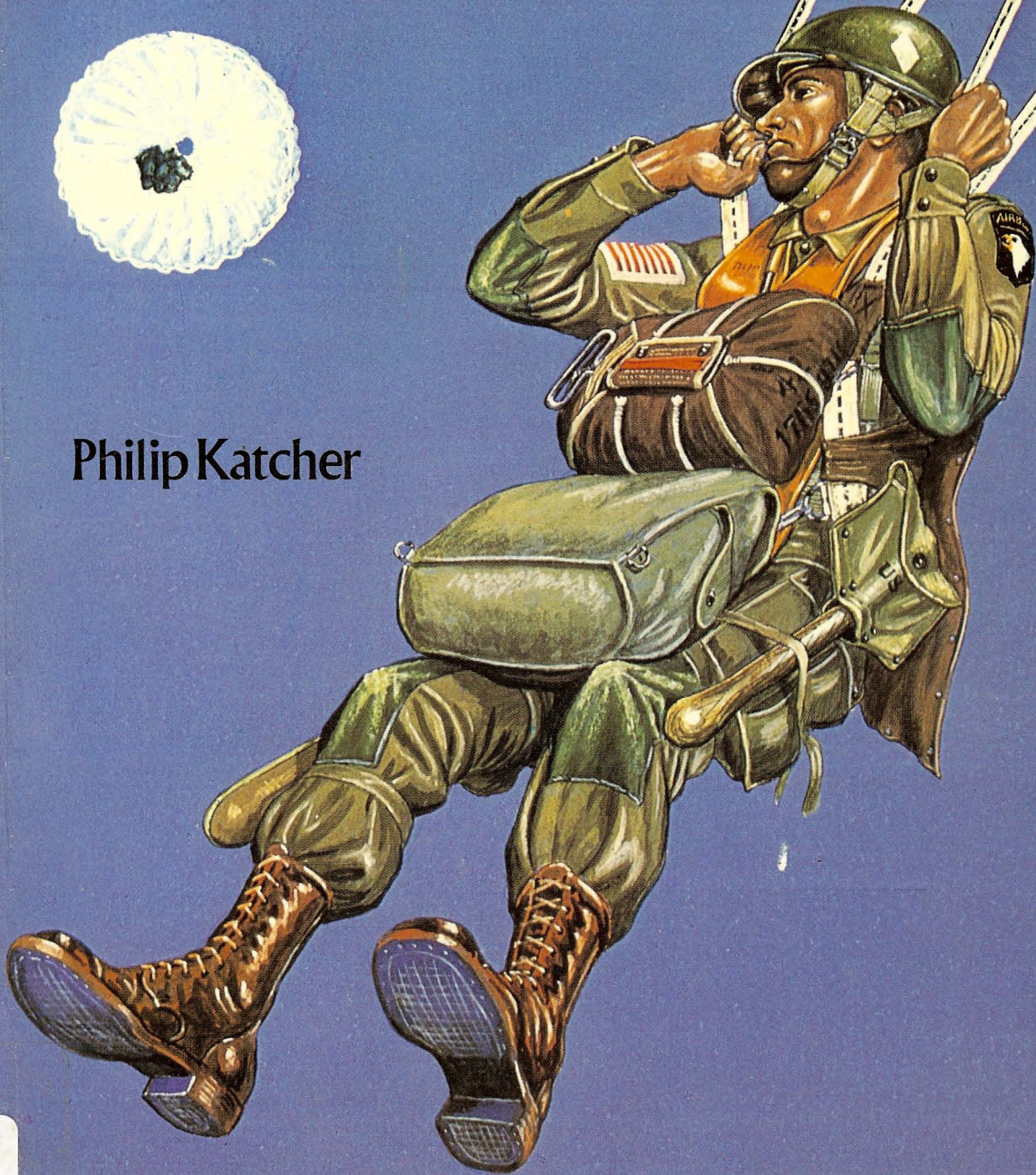


OSPREY · VANGUARD 5

UNITED STATES AIRBORNE
DIVISION 1942-45



Philip Katcher



C73
VANGUARD SERIES

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US 101st AIRBORNE DIVISION 1942-45

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Winston Churchill shakes hands with divisional second-in-command Brigadier-General Don Pratt before his review of the 101st on 23 March 1944. In the background, l. to r.: General Eisenhower; Brigadier-General Maxwell D. Taylor, divisional commander. Pratt was later killed in a glider crash in Normandy. (US Army)

The Beginnings

In early 1940 the whole world watched as German paratroopers opened the way for their army into Belgium and Holland. One US soldier who was especially interested in these developments was the Chief of Infantry, who, on 2 January 1940, had been ordered to study paratroopers and air-transported infantry.

On 25 June 1940, forty-eight soldiers out of 200 volunteers from the 29th Infantry Regiment were formed into a Parachute Test Platoon. The fledgling paratroopers began work at Fort Benning, Georgia, developing equipment and tactics. At first they copied German and Russian methods (the Red Army having used paratroops as early as 1930); later uniquely American equipment was developed. The test platoon developed into a company and, in October 1940, the company was named the 501st Parachute Battalion. In February 1941 the 501st participated with the 4th Infantry Division and 2nd Armored Division in working out air/ground tactics.

The new organization quickly caught the public

eye. A best-forgotten movie, *Parachute Battalion*, was made about the 501st, and this brought more volunteers to its ranks. One such volunteer was Edson D. Raff, then an infantry company commander on duty in Hawaii. He wrote his aunt from Fort Benning on 26 June 1941, describing the unit's training:

'The first part of the curriculum concentrates on conditioning, calisthenics, and exercises to harden the muscles; the second teaches techniques in jumping from a plane and manipulating a parachute in the air and on the ground; the third, tower practice, and the fourth, jumps from a plane. Packing and maintenance of chutes is interwoven with the outdoor tasks.'

Towards the end of 1941 the 501st and additional parachute battalions which had been formed later took part in the Louisiana and Carolina manoeuvres. There they were a smashing success, capturing command posts, raiding rear areas, destroying bridges and overrunning airfields—much as the Germans had done in actual

combat. Because of their successes the battalions were made full-fledged regiments, each with three battalions, in May 1942. On 16 August 1942 the old 82nd Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, was divided; with the new parachute infantry regiments added, it formed two new Airborne Divisions—the 82nd and 101st. The 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment remained at Fort Benning until the whole 101st was brought together in early autumn of 1942 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

‘The 101st Airborne Division’, wrote the Division’s new commander, pioneer paratrooper Major-General W. C. Lee, to his men, ‘has no history, but it has a rendezvous with destiny. Like the early American pioneers, whose invincible courage was the foundation stone of this nation, we have broken with the past and its traditions in order to establish our claim to the future.’

Training for the new paratroopers—volunteers all—was rugged. Recalled Private Donald R. Burgett, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment: ‘At no time was a trooper allowed to sit down, lean against anything or stand in a resting attitude when he was outside the confines of his own barracks. Another thing . . . was that at no time was a trooper allowed to walk from one point to another, unless ordered to do so; he must run or double-time.’

This constant running gave the men one of their first mottoes, ‘hubba-hubba’, which was supposed to mean ‘hurry, hurry’ in Yiddish. Everything in the airborne was done ‘hubba-hubba’. If it wasn’t, or the instructors weren’t satisfied with whatever was done, the offending volunteer was told to do push-ups—25, 50 or even a hundred of them. One of the Division’s regiments, the 506th, drew its motto from its daily ‘three-mile run’. Every morning before breakfast the men ran three miles—that is, three miles to Mt Currahee, three miles up the mountain, three miles down, and three miles back. Then came the regular day’s training.

Not only was the training hard physically, it was hard mentally. Two men’s shroud lines became entangled during a jump, and both fell heavily and mortally to earth in front of some volunteers. A sergeant got into a jeep, drove out to the two bodies, picked something up and returned to his trainees. ‘Now, does anyone want to quit?’ he asked as he passed around what he picked up. Burgett saw it

was one of the dead men’s boots. ‘They were bloodied,’ he wrote; ‘a small sliver of white bone protruded through one of them, and the blood hadn’t congealed yet.’ And yet not one man of that group quit.

In the spring of 1943 the trained, toughened Division took part in ten-day-long manoeuvres in South Carolina. Later, in June, the Division participated in Second Army war games held in Tennessee. In August the Division was sent to Camp Shanks, New York, from where, later that month, they were shipped out to Liverpool. From Liverpool the Division, by now nicknamed the ‘Screaming Eagles’, moved south to just outside Newbury, Berkshire.

In England the Division, already earmarked for the invasion of Europe, began day and night training. They jumped and assembled in all sorts of conditions until it became almost second nature. They learned about British and German uniforms, weapons and equipment. They even took courses in ‘combat swimming’. One especially realistic training exercise was held when the Division’s airplanes, full of men ready to jump in a night manoeuvre, found themselves in the midst of a Luftwaffe bomber stream. The men jumped in anti-aircraft fire, many of them being captured by alert British Home Guards, who were sure they were German paratroopers. The next day officers had to go around freeing their men from jails all over the south of England.

Many of the men were sent in secret to Torquay in southern England, where the ground was thought to resemble Normandy’s hedgerow country. So they wouldn’t be seen, they were quartered in a seaside hotel and not one of them was allowed below the second floor—except, that is, for the three occasions each day when the whole lot of them marched clear around the bay to the other side of the town to eat!

In March 1944 ill-health forced General Lee to relinquish command to Brigadier-General Maxwell D. Taylor. That same month the Division was inspected by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and other Allied top brass. Two 506th battalions jumped before a reviewing stand filled with high-ranking Allied officers, the last practice jump they got to make before ‘D-Day’ itself. Except for one piece of



equipment with an unopened parachute which slammed dramatically into the ground, the jump was totally successful.

While the Division was preparing for its big day, unknown to them all there was some thought of cancelling the entire airborne part of the invasion. British Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory was against it, telling Eisenhower that it would cost casualties of up to 50 per cent of the paratroopers and 70 per cent of the glider-borne infantry. The plan called for the Division to drop north of Carentan, behind a beach code-named 'Utah'. Once on the ground, the Division would hold open the causeways inland from Utah. It would also advance south to Carentan and make contact with the forces landing on the beach called 'Omaha'. Planners other than Leigh-Mallory felt that the airborne part was so vital to the whole invasion that without it the landing on Utah Beach would have to be abandoned. Both Field-Marshal

Glider infantrymen of the 371st prepare to take off during manoeuvres at Greenham Common, Berks, late in 1943. A bazooka and a Thompson SMG can be seen at left, and a Browning Automatic Rifle with bipod at right. (US Army)

Montgomery and Lieutenant-General Omar Bradley, the land commanders, told Eisenhower how essential they felt the airborne task was to the overall plan; in the end, Eisenhower agreed with them.

The last days before the invasion were spent in classrooms and tents, learning the details of the ground on which they were to jump from maps, aerial photographs and scale models. Experience showed how important it was for each man to know his unit mission, and therefore his own mission, in complete detail. Every man was trained to be able to draw a map of the area in which he was to drop from memory.

The correct combination of moon and tides

demanding that 'D-Day' had to be in early June 1944, and it was planned for the 5th. The Division was locked into its camp, and contact with the outside world completely cut off. The men received escape kits which included a compass, a map and a small amount of French money. Small metal clickers were issued to be used as a recognition signal in the dark. It was 3 June, and the men knew 'D-Day' was at hand. All day on the 4th, however, it poured rain from dismal grey skies. No flying was possible in that sort of weather, and the men waited in soggy tents to hear if the invasion had been postponed a month or a day.

On the evening of the 4th Gen. Taylor held an informal session with his senior officers in his quarters. Brigadier-General Don F. Pratt, assistant division commander, was sitting on the bed when another officer came in. The newcomer tossed his hat on the bed. Pratt jumped up, crying, 'My God, that's damn bad luck.' Everyone laughed, but Pratt didn't sit on the bed again.

The postponement was for a day, and on the 5th the men ate a special noon-time meal: fried chicken with all the trimmings, and ice-cream. The men rubbed their faces with charcoal from the fires, checked their weapons for a last time and strapped on their equipment. General Taylor tried to relax by playing squash, but tore a ligament in his right knee. Rather than let anyone know, and possibly be forced to miss the jump, Taylor kept himself stiff and straight all day.

About 6.30pm Eisenhower, still concerned about Leigh-Mallory's worries, found himself drawn to the Division and drove to Newbury. There, he later wrote, 'I found the men in fine fettle, many of them joshingly admonishing me that I had no cause for worry, since the 101st was on the job and everything would be taken care of in fine shape.' Eisenhower, accompanied by only a single staff officer, walked about, talking informally to the men in small groups. As the Division loaded into the C-47s, Eisenhower walked back to the headquarters, where he climbed to the roof to watch them take off. Yesterday's clouds were gone; the night was crystal clear and the sky was filled with stars.

Slowly the airplanes rolled down the runway, and circled above until whole flights were together in formation. Then they turned and headed for France. One correspondent who was near



Glider infantry, who were not volunteers, were dressed and equipped like regular line infantry. This soldier, photographed in the States in 1941, wears standard field jacket and webbing and carries the 1903 Springfield rifle.

Eisenhower saw the general's eyes fill with tears as he watched the twinkling navigational lights and exhausts disappear. When, at about midnight, the last airplane was gone from view, he turned and slowly walked to his car. 'Well' his driver heard him say to nobody in particular, 'it's on.' He stopped a second and looked back at the empty sky. 'No one can stop it now.'

Normandy

The airplanes flew along peacefully enough until they came over the Channel Islands, then in German hands. Anti-aircraft fire tore into them there, and again as they crossed the coast. A third and even heavier flak barrage hit the formations only minutes before they arrived over the drop-zones, and by then German small arms were joining in.

'It was like jumping into a Roman candle,' thought Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick J. Cassidy, commander of the 1st Battalion of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment (hereafter written as 1/502nd).

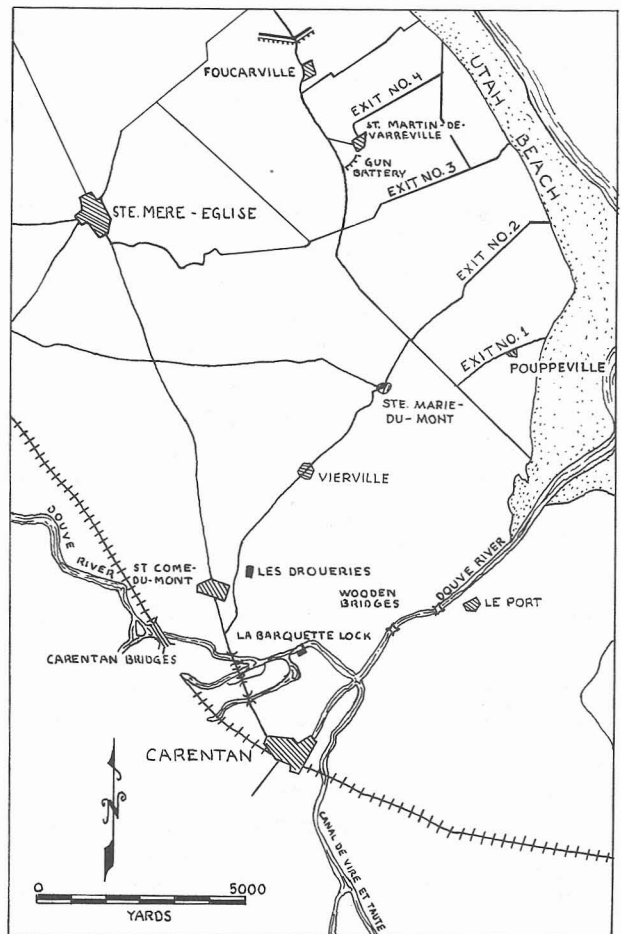
At 12.15am, Tuesday, 6 June 1944, 101st Division pathfinders, the first Allies to land in the long-awaited invasion, touched down in France. First among them was cigar-chewing Captain Frank Lillyman. After getting clear of his parachute lines, Lillyman looked about to see who had fallen with him. There, in the dark, was a large shape moving straight at him. Cocking his gun, he almost fired when the shape gave a low, sad 'moo'. Gathering his senses and what other pathfinders he could find in the vicinity, Capt. Lillyman set off flares to mark the drop-zone and then moved off in the direction of one of the Division's major objectives, a German battery which covered two important causeways leading up from Utah beach.

The rest of the Division's planes aimed in on the flares. Unhappily, a rolling cloud bank confused many of the planes, and enemy flak still more. Planes avoiding flak came in low—often, too low. One 506th private hit the ground only three seconds after opening, and later said he saw men dropped so low that their parachutes hadn't time to open before they hit the ground. Another private

found himself landing in the lapping waves of the beach, and watched in horror as the rest of his stick dropped further and further out to sea; all of them were drowned. The Division Chaplain, Fr. Francis Sampson, dropped into a swampy marsh in water over his head. Dragged under by his equipment, he cut it all away with his knife, while his still-open parachute dragged him through the swamp, finally coming to a stop in shallow water. Under machine gun fire, he returned to his original landing site and dived for his Mass kit, retrieving it on the fifth try.

At 12.56am Lt.-Col. Robert Cole, 3/502nd commander, fell heavily into a giant rosebush. It took fifteen minutes of hacking before he managed to get out. Finally free, Cole went about gathering all the men he could, only to find they were mostly from the 82nd Airborne—he had landed on the wrong drop-zone!

Sketch map showing the Division's main area of operations behind Utah beach, Normandy, June 1944.



After gathering a group Colonel Cole headed off, ending up in the town of St Mère-Église. He realized that he had gone in the wrong direction, and returned to find his check point, a chapel. On the way he picked up a number of his men and the group continued south. Their objective was a German battery, but on the way they ran into some other officers, who told them, 'Don't bother about the gun position. It's a wreck and Steve Chappuis (2/502nd) is sitting on it.'

Cole then split his unit into three groups. Lieutenant Robert G. Burns took the 506th men south to meet their own regiment, and Capt. Robert L. Clements and another group headed to Exit No. 4, which, meeting no opposition, he held by 7.30am. The last group, headed by Cole himself, went to Exit No. 3, also without opposition. At 9.30am a German unit, not knowing that Americans held the exits, ran into the dug-in 3/502nd; most were cut down.

Colonel Cassidy's 1/502nd was supposed to land near St Martin de Varreville, to clean out that area and then to form north to defend the beach landings. The battalion also had to take care of a German battery overlooking the causeway exits.

Cassidy himself landed under fire on a road intersection. It took him twenty minutes to crawl a hundred yards from where he landed. He finally reached a safe place next to a hedgerow, where he found his radio operator. Snapping their clickers, the two moved along, turning up more strays, mostly from the 506th. When there were some 200 men gathered, Lt.-Col. Robert Strayer, who had wrenched his leg landing, took his 506th troopers and headed for their objective in the south. Cassidy and his men continued towards their objective when they ran into Capt. Lillyman.

'I've got news for you,' Lillyman said. 'I scouted that coastal battery. It's thoroughly bombed out. No need to worry about that one.'

'In that case,' Cassidy replied, 'pick up your men, move a little further north and set up a road block just short of Foucarville.' Saluting—US paratroopers were noted for their habit of saluting under fire—Lillyman turned and headed as ordered with his men.

Foucarville was already the site of action. Captain Cleveland R. Fitzgerald, Co. B, 502nd, with nine other men, entered the town from the

west without knowing a German headquarters was there. An alert sentry fired, hitting the captain in the chest. Falling, the captain cut the sentry down with a burst from his tommy-gun and gasped, 'Don't come up!' One of his men ran to his side. Fitzgerald whispered, 'It's too late, I'm dying.' The sound of firing attracted other paratroopers, who joined the squad in driving the Germans out of Foucarville. The Germans fell back into a fortified hill position north of the town. The Americans fell back through the town carrying all their wounded except Fitzgerald, who said he had been too badly hurt to be moved. (Ironically, Fitzgerald survived, became battalion commander, and died after the war in a traffic accident.)

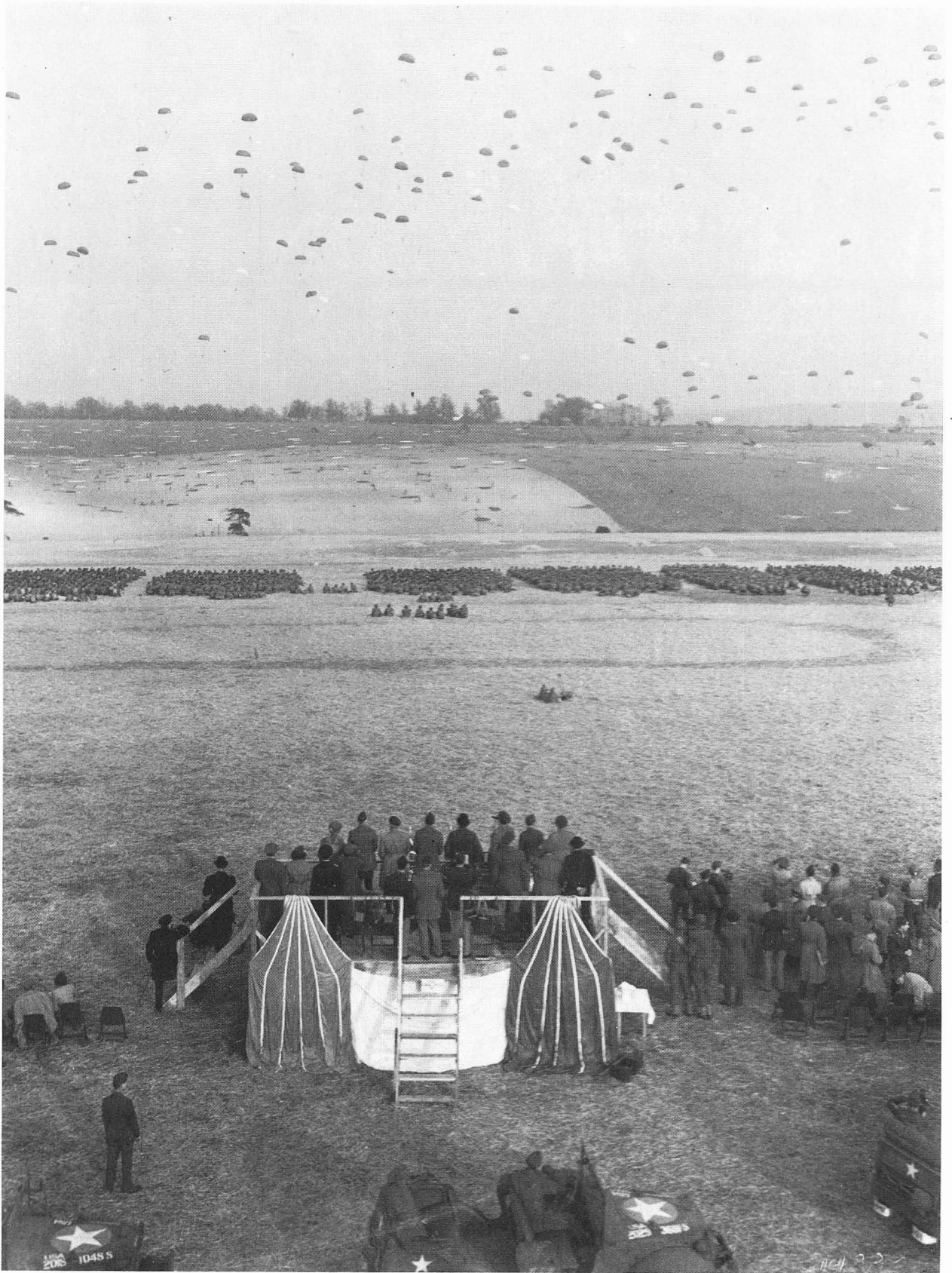
After leaving Lillyman, Cassidy and his staff went down to the battered battery. There he set up his command post in a nearby farmhouse. The next day the Americans discovered two German privates who had hidden in a closet in Cassidy's command post all through 'D-Day'. 'They had been very kind to me,' said the landlady who hid them.

At about 8.15am Cassidy's radioman reached the 4th Division, which was landing on Utah Beach. 'The enemy gun position near St Martin is in American hands,' he told the 4th's commanding general.

'That's the best news I've had in many hours,' came the reply. 'Now what about the causeways?' Cassidy didn't know, and sent a patrol to find out. They soon returned from the causeway west of St Martin, where they had cleared out a dozen Germans from an overlooking church steeple. 'Exit No. 4 is now open and ready for your advance,' went out the word to the 4th.

Staff-Sergeant Harrison Summers, Co. B, 502nd, picked up a group and went after his objective, a barracks complex on the Reuville road. Summers kicked in the first door, spraying the room with tommy-gun fire. Four Germans fell as the rest fled. Then the sergeant charged and cleared the second barracks, where his group set up a machine gun. With this supporting fire pinning down the Germans in the third barracks, Summers kicked in

Two battalions of the 506th Parachute Infantry jump before an audience of their comrades, Prime Minister Churchill and General Eisenhower on 23 March 1944 at Newbury, Berks. (US Army)





Soldiers of the Division mount motorcycles during an exercise in May 1944; in the background is an Airspeed Horsa glider. (US Army)

that door, firing as he went and killing six Germans before the others in the barracks surrendered.

While Summers was fighting his one-man war the others in his group hung back. Finally Pvt. John F. Camien Jnr. joined him, asking, 'Why are you doing this?'

'I can't tell you,' Summers replied.

'What about the others?' Camien asked.

'They don't seem to want to fight and I can't make them. So I've got to finish it.'

'OK,' Camien said, 'I'm with you.'

The two pushed on from building to building. Camien covered the sergeant with his carbine while Summers sprayed room after room. A third man joined them with the machine gun: in five houses the trio left a trail of thirty dead Germans. They found one group of enemy soldiers in the sixth building sitting about, eating breakfast as if nothing were happening. Not a man was spared. Then the trio, now joined by a bazooka man, attacked a two-storey stone barracks. The bazooka set the place on fire, and they captured most of the Germans who tried to escape; the rest were picked up by the advancing 4th Division. Summers later received a battlefield commission.

By noon the 2/502nd had managed to set up four road-blocks in Foucarville. Small bands of

Germans, trying to escape the 4th Division, were caught by the paratroopers. It was also at about noon that 101st elements met the advance units of the 4th Division. Corporal Louis Merlano may well have been the first 'Screaming Eagle' to meet the infantrymen. Dirty, tired and bruised, his first words were, 'Where in hell have you guys been?'

At around 6pm the 502nd moved back into and through Foucarville. There Co. A stopped, under heavy fire, while Co. C moved to Haut-Fornel. Co. B, in reserve, broke up an attack on the 1/502nd command post, and then moved against the fortified hill near Foucarville. By 9pm Germans on the hill raised a white flag, and the battalion took prisoner 82 German soldiers and one Frenchwoman, a soldier's wife.

Flamboyant, theatrical Col. Howard R. 'Skeets' Johnson's 501st Regiment was given the task of taking and holding the La Barquette lock. It was thought that the Americans could open the lock, flooding the area and cutting off the Germans from the beach. Later, when the Allies were ready to advance, the lock could be closed. In fact the mission was pointless, as the Germans had long since opened the lock. The flooded land, under tall

General Eisenhower chats with Corporal Leroy J. Gravelle of the 502nd during an inspection after the Division's return from France in August 1944; Major-General Taylor looks on. (US Army)

grass, looked like dry land in aerial photographs. On landing, the 1/501st was scattered all over the area, its commander killed and the executive officer and battalion staff missing. With the 3/501st being held as the Division's reserve, only the 2/501st was able to move ahead on this mission. Colonel Johnson had about 150 of his men gathered by dawn, and headed towards the lock through the marshes. He sent some fifty men ahead to grab the lock, which they did, finding it deserted. The group then dug in.

Lieutenant-Colonel Robert A. Ballard, 2/501st, landed with some men near another regimental target, St Côme-du-Mont. At about 5.30am Ballard moved off to take Les Droueries with the force he had managed to assemble—some 125 riflemen, a bazooka man, four machine guns and their crews, and a 60mm mortar and crew. The group soon ran into heavy German defences and stopped. At about 8am reinforcements arrived, but the group still couldn't move forward. Hearing Ballard's firing, Johnson called him for reinforcements for the lock position, then under

German machine gun and 88mm fire. Although Ballard couldn't send any aid, an artillery officer with Johnson managed to get his radio working and directed fire against the Germans from the USS *Quincy*. After a thirty-minute barrage, the Germans fell back. Then the *Quincy's* guns were turned against Ballard's enemies.

Private Ambrose Allie, 3/501st, landed on a rooftop in Ste Marie-du-Mont and had no time to do anything more than get free of his rig before he was grabbed by Germans. They stood him against a wall and were just about to shoot him when several paratroopers came round the corner. Reacting quicker than the Germans, they shot them all down and freed Allie.

General Taylor landed in a pasture near Ste Marie-du-Mont, where he wandered about for twenty minutes totally alone. Finally he ran into a 501st private, who must have been amazed to receive a bear hug from the general. Shortly afterwards the pair met up with staff officers in abundance, and a few riflemen. The 'brass-heavy' group moved off to Pouppeville, reaching the



town's outskirts by about gam. 'Never in the history of military operations', General Taylor quipped, 'have so few been commanded by so many.' The general threw in his reserve, Lt.-Col. Julian J. Ewell's 3/501st, to take Pouppeville, which fell in house-to-house fighting. By 11am Ewell, Taylor and the Division staff were in German headquarters in Pouppeville.

Colonel Robert F. Sink and Lt.-Col. William L. Turner of the 506th took their objective, Culoville, shortly after landing without opposition. After dawn Sink sent the 1/506th to take the Pouppeville exit from the beaches. By evening Co. D, 2/506th was dug in on Exit No. 2, the Houdienville exit, while Co. D, supported by four 4th Division Sherman tanks, had taken a German battery near St Germain-de-Varreville. The 3/506th, supported by a platoon of the 326th Airborne Engineers and two demolition sections, dropped south of Vierville. They quickly assembled and took two bridges at Le Port.

Some seventy-five men of the 1/506th trapped an enemy artillery battery, but found it too strong to rush. Then a bazooka man, with his sixth rocket, hit both enemy ammunition dumps and, as smoke and flames billowed into the sky, rushed forward yelling, 'Come on! All you have to do is kill the rest of them!' Others of the 1/506th moved on their objective, Ste Marie-du-Mont, where they found an enemy observation post in a church steeple. Taking aim with a captured '88', the troopers blasted the steeple apart with one shot. With its collapse, the rest of the Germans fled.

Artillery support for the whole Division was to be provided initially by the 377th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. Unfortunately, all but one 75mm pack howitzer was lost in the swamps and marshes. Other artillery was to arrive at 4am on gliders. Astonishingly, all the gliders headed right onto their appointed landing zones. It was still dark and the pilots had made only three or four practice landings before this one, and all of those in broad daylight.

The Division's lead glider, marked with a big 'No. 1' on its side and with General Pratt in its co-pilot's seat, came in first. Hitting the ground at a hundred miles an hour, it spun out of control and smashed into a hedgerow. The general, caught in the crushed cockpit, died instantly. The pilot was

thrown clear and survived with two broken legs. Most of the other gliders were also damaged badly, but their equipment—jeeps, anti-tank guns, medical supplies and even a small bulldozer—was intact. The bulldozer was for the 326th Airborne Engineers, but that battalion was too scattered to do much good on 'D-Day'.

By 5.30pm the Division's medics, using captured German lorries, were able to ship their wounded down to the beaches to return to England. The day had been, on the whole, a success. Afterwards it was confirmed that the Division's area was defended by the German 709th Division in the north and along the east coast, the 243rd Division in the west, the 91st Division in the middle of the drop-zones, and the 6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment south of Carantan. About 40,000 men, plus Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe artillery troops, were in the area. Scattering had been so bad that by dawn only some 1,100 men out of 6,600 dropped were assembled and ready for action. That evening Gen. Taylor and divisional artillery commander Brig.-Gen. Anthony McAuliffe visited Col. Sink's Ste Marie-du-Mont command post at Hiesville to get a good night's sleep—his usual habit.

Most airborne men spent that night under constant enemy fire. At 4.30am the 1/401st Glider Infantry arrived and was sent to the road to Beaumont. About the same time most battalions ordered a 'stand-to'. In the 2/501st the order came just in time to fight off an attack by German patrols. The Germans followed their attack with a mortar bombardment, but at 6.30 Colonel Ballard ordered the 2/501st to resume its attack. Colonel Johnson, still at the La Barquette locks, ordered Ballard to reinforce him, but by this time divisional command saw the uselessness of that position in contrast to Ballard's. McAuliffe cancelled Johnson's orders.

For many men 'D-Day Plus One' was like 'D-Day'—they spent it trying to attain their original objectives. It was in this drive to accomplish assigned missions that all the hard training proved its value.

Private Burgett, for example, joined a group of his outfit's men heading for his objective. On the way they had to pass through another town. 'Just before we reached the town the big private shouted double-time and we automatically picked up the cadence and started jogging at a pace that we were



all so familiar with. We passed a road sign marked Ste Marie-du-Mont and saw troopers crouched in doorways and lying in gutters along the road. Firing was coming in from the other end of the street as well as going out from this end, but we kept on with a steady rhythmic running until one of the troopers yelled to us that all the town wasn't taken yet.

“Hell, we know that,” one of the men up front replied, “but we've got other things to do right now.” And the group jogged on to their objective.

In the late afternoon the 1/6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment attacked the La Barquette position. Colonel Johnson was wounded in the hand, but the 501st stood firm, and after a fierce fire fight some 350 Germans surrendered.

The next day Col. Ewell's 3/501st attacked the road south of St Côme-du-Mont, while two 506th battalions, following an artillery barrage which began after midnight, attacked the town itself. Weary after almost three days without much sleep, the Americans were beaten off and subsequently dug in. The Germans then counter-attacked, getting to within a hedgerow of the Division's front line before being thrown back. This happened five or six times, with the strongest attack hitting the 3/501st about 2.30pm. The happy arrival of three light tanks stopped that attack, and the Germans, blowing up the Douve Bridge, withdrew from the town. That bridge's destruction had been one of the

Artillerymen of Battery C, 377th Field Artillery, fix parachutes on the cases containing the parts of their 'knock-down' 75mm howitzer. (US Army)

original 101st objectives.

Shortly after 4pm the 1/506th sent in a patrol which found St Côme-du-Mont empty. By dark on 8 June the Division had completed all missions originally assigned it. The 101st was holding a firm line along the western and southern limits of the area in which it had been fighting for three days. The 501st was at La Barquette in reserve; the 327th held the locks to the river mouth; and the 502nd held a line northward to Les Quesnils. The next day was spent on the defensive, holding these positions.

That day at least one 506th private went on his own private mission, in one of those weird incidents which war produces. Riding a captured white horse, with a pair of Lugers strapped around his waist, he galloped into a German machine gun nest, yelling, 'Hi Ho, Silver', the trademark of the popular radio show, *The Lone Ranger*. Pistols blazing, he charged twice, but on his third ride the Germans, who must have been too amazed to shoot straight at first, found their mark. His body, cut almost in half, was hurled out of the saddle.

Early on 10 June the 327th was sent across the Douve to capture Carentan and link up with the 29th Division. The Germans held the city in strength and stopped the glider men 600 yards from its outskirts. The 3/502nd was sent to their support.



Their work on the weapons packs completed, the artillerymen fit their personal cargo bags and reserve rigs. (US Army)

The city was surrounded by marshes dissected by a spider's web of roads built on causeways. There were no paths on which to move except these causeways, no places to dig in at all. All day the men sometimes dashed, sometimes crawled along the causeways, and took up positions just outside the city.

The next day the attack pressed on but without enough artillery support due to ammunition shortages. The 3/502nd had managed to get onto the 'island' on which the city was built, but stalled there. Colonel Cole, down in a ditch with his men, looked about him. 'Everybody fix bayonets and

reload rifles with a full clip,' he yelled. 'Be ready to go at the sound of a whistle.' Then, after a few minutes, he stood up, blew his whistle and started out across the field. The men near him heard the orders and followed, but the word did not travel far down the line. Some saw the charging men and followed on their own initiative; others didn't. Still, the Germans faltered and then fell back. Cole received the Medal of Honor, the first 101st Division member to be so honoured.

About noon the battle died down, with the 3/502nd holding an area around a cabbage patch, and Cole's command post in a farmhouse just beyond the causeway. The 1/502nd came up as reinforcements. A truce was called to help clear away wounded, which lasted from noon to 1pm. At

6pm the Germans counter-attacked, but were stopped by ground fire and an intense five-minute-long artillery barrage using freshly arrived ammunition.

Meanwhile the 327th had been steadily moving on Carentan from the west. Their attack on 11 June was stopped. The relatively rested 501st and 506th were thrown in. By 7am, 12 June, the 3/327th was well into the town, which was cleared out by 10am.

The Germans, however, were not giving up without a fight. The 38th SS Panzer-Grenadier Regiment of the 17th SS Panzer-Grenadier Division '*Götz von Berlichingen*' was sent against the Americans. Since the airborne troops were short of heavy weapons, Combat Command A—a tank battalion and an infantry battalion—of the 2nd Armored Division was sent to support the Division.

At 5am on 13 June, the 501st and 506th attacked the gathering Germans outside Carentan, but were halted. The next day the attack, aided now by the 2nd Armored Division's 1/66th Armored Regi-

ment, pressed on. By 4pm the 502nd linked up with the 82nd Airborne's 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The two beachheads were connected.

It had been hard, punishing fighting since the early morning hours of 'D-Day'. Allied headquarters knew it, but couldn't spare the reliable 101st yet. After Carentan had been cleared and the beaches linked, the Division was sent on 27 June towards Periers, near Cherbourg. There they replaced armoured troops in this fairly quiet area. The Division's men weren't so quiet, however, when they read American newspapers which gave credit for Carentan's capture to the Rangers.

On 13 July the Division returned to England for rest, refitting and reinforcement. The men received nine days' leave, after which they began another round of training exercises.

Airborne artillerymen rest beside their glider before taking off for the 'Market-Garden' drop. Note lifejackets, and mixture of jump boots and double buckle combat boots. (US Army)



Holland

After Normandy everything was a bit of a let-down. On 10 August Gen. Eisenhower inspected the Division and awarded decorations for valour. The troops kept on training, and staffs kept on planning. One plan a week, on an average, was made for the airborne arm; and once a week the plans were shelved, as fast-moving ground units took what would have been airborne objectives. Twice, between its return in July and the day it finally took off on a real mission, the Division was ready to board its planes when the mission was cancelled at the last minute. A total of sixteen operations was planned for the Division in August and September; all were abandoned. Discipline began to suffer. General Eisenhower had to call a top-level conference to discuss reports that 'the cocky 101st Airborne Division troops were on the rampage'.

Finally, someone came up with a plan for using airborne troops which was accepted. It was a fairly fantastic plan, coming from a totally unlikely source. Field-Marshal Montgomery, master of the 'set piece battle', the general who refused to move until his front was 'tidy' and his forces overwhelming, produced a plan which just might have won the war—if he had had more luck than any general has any right to expect.

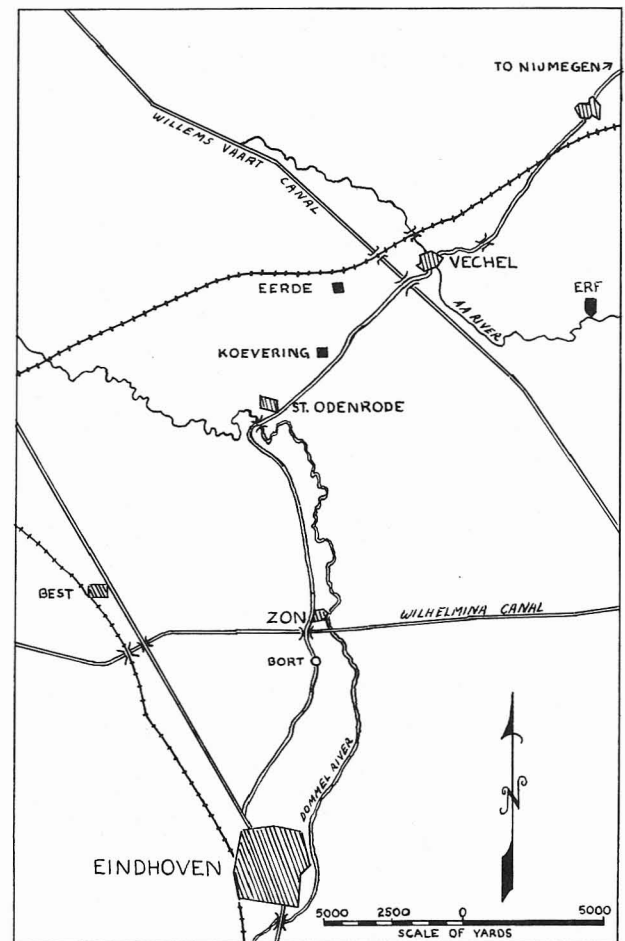
Basically, Operation 'Market-Garden' called for a mass drop of three airborne divisions along a road running north from Allied lines to cross the Rhine at the Dutch town of Arnhem. The British 1st Airborne Division would take Arnhem and the bridge over the lower Rhine. The American 82nd Airborne Division would land between Nijmegen and Grave, taking bridges on the Waal and Maas rivers. The 101st would take two large bridges over canals, nine highway and two railroad bridges, all north of Eindhoven. The road the Division would then hold ran fifteen miles between Eindhoven and Veghel. Once the bridges were grabbed, the tanks of British XXX Corps would break through German lines and dash through the 101st and 82nd areas to link up with the 1st in Arnhem. The dash was expected to take two days. This would be the largest airborne operation of the war.

An important part of the plan called for minimal enemy resistance. Unfortunately, the Germans had

put their 9th 'Hohenstaufen' and 10th 'Frundsberg' SS Panzer Divisions near Arnhem for refitting. Moreover, the earlier panic which had gripped the Germans in Holland was over. They were digging in now, preparing to give up their territory slowly and at great cost.

The Division's main drop-zone was at the edge of a forest a mile and a half from Zon, at a spot halfway between Veghel and Eindhoven. The 502nd and 506th would land there. The 501st had two drop-zones, both north and west of Veghel, within a few hundred yards of four bridges. Because the British were expected to reach the Division area quickly, only infantry would be dropped on the first day. Most artillery and engineers would be brought in over the following two days.

Sketch map of the Division's area of operations for 'Market-Garden' in September 1944.





On 15 September 1944 men of the 101st found themselves sealed in Newbury again without contact with the outside world. Corporal Hansford Vest, 502nd, was amazed by the number of airplanes and gliders 'parked for miles all over the countryside'. All in all there were 4,700 airplanes to be used for the operation. The 101st Division alone used 424 C-47s and 70 gliders.

At about 10.10am on 17 September—broad daylight was acceptable because of Allied air superiority—the Division's pathfinder planes took off. They followed waves of bombers, which smashed German positions in the area. At about 10.25am the rest of the Division took off. Captain Neil Sweeney thought that there were so many planes, 'it looked like we could get out on the wings and walk all the way to Holland.' From their Greenham airfield the Division's planes went south, turning towards the drop-zones over Belgium. The flight was smooth. At 12.47pm the first planes appeared over the heaths north of Eindhoven and dropped the pathfinders. Flak was heavy, heavier than expected. One plane went down in flames, dropping only four survivors. Still,

Members of the 326th Airborne Medical Company check their ambulances, damaged by Luftwaffe bombs at Nijmegen. (US Army)

by 12.54pm all pathfinders were on the ground and drop-zones marked.

The Division's planes ran into heavy flak over Eindhoven. Colonel Sink looked out of his airplane door just in time to see the wing cut into pieces. 'Well, there goes the wing,' he said, turning. To his relief, he later said, 'Nobody seemed to think much about it. They figured by this time they were practically in.'

One plane was hit in both fuel tanks. Out of the plane's crew and a load of sixteen paratroopers, only three badly burned troopers survived. They fell into a German tank bivouac area; despite their burns, they fought from a ditch for half an hour until finally overwhelmed and taken prisoner.

General Taylor was in the same plane as the 1/502nd's Col. Cassidy. The colonel watched as a nearby plane burst into flames, and counted only seven parachutes open in its wake. Then another plane was hit, but he saw everyone jump from its flaming fuselage. Watching the planes, he failed to



‘Market-Garden’—divisional medical personnel take cover in hedgerows after leaving their gliders. (US Army)

notice when the green light, the jump signal, went on in his own plane.

‘Cassidy,’ said Taylor, behind him, ‘the light’s on.’

‘Yes, sir,’ the Colonel said, ‘I know it.’ And with that he jumped, followed by the divisional commander.

Despite flak, pilots brought even burning planes right over their assigned drop-zones. Of the 6,695 paratroopers who boarded airplanes, 6,669 actually jumped. Only two planes failed to make their drop-zones. Every fourth plane had some flak damage, and sixteen planes went down with their crews. Out of the seventy gliders on the initial drop, fifty-three made it without damage. They delivered 80 per cent of the men they carried unhurt, and 75 per cent of the jeeps and trailers without damage. It was, Taylor thought, an ‘unusually successful’ jump. He originally anticipated a casualty rate as high as 30 per cent.

Within two hours of landing the 501st took Veghel. The 1/502nd quickly took the bridge over the Dommel River at St Oedenrode. There they found, to their amazement, the local phone system

in peacetime working order. They called Valkenswaard, hoping to speak with someone from the advancing British armour. But the armour wasn’t there yet.

In the south, the objectives were the large bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal at Zon, four miles north of Eindhoven, and a smaller bridge at Best, four miles west of the Zon bridge. The Best bridge was thought to be an easy objective, with no Germans nearby. Co. H, 502nd, was sent to take it. Unfortunately, intelligence was at fault. The German 59th Infantry Division, plus artillery, was at Best, an important German headquarters site.

The 506th formed up immediately after landing, as quickly and neatly as if on an exercise. Then they took off for the Zon bridge, meeting no opposition until they reached the northern outskirts of Zon, where a German 88mm gun fired several rounds at them. Private Thomas G. Lindsey quickly put the gun out of action with his bazooka, and the 506th pressed on. When they were only fifty yards from the canal, the bridge suddenly seemed to rise in the air and black smoke blossomed out on either side. The men dropped as pieces of steel and concrete fell among them. The important Zon bridge, the first major link in a chain of bridges all vitally needed if Operation ‘Market-Garden’ were to succeed, was destroyed.

Almost without thinking Maj. James LaPrade, Second-Lieutenant Millford F. Weller and Sgt. Donald B. Dunning dived into the canal, swam to the other side and, driving out the Germans, set up a bridgehead. Airborne engineers found the bridge’s central column was still intact, and they began building a temporary crossing. Some civilians told them of a supply of black market lumber stored in a nearby garage, which was rapidly put into use for the flimsy bridge. In less than an hour and a half, engineers finished a walkway across the Wilhelmina Canal.

‘The bridge was unsatisfactory from every point of view,’ said Col. Sink later, ‘but it did enable me to put the rest of the regiment across, single file.’

The Best bridge now seemed of major importance. The 502nd pressed its attack, reinforcing the troops originally assigned this objective. But the Germans held on, and the fight lasted all night. Colonel Cole died there, on 18 September, shot in the head by a sniper.



The 18th found the 501st holding the northern bridges, with the 506th—‘Five-oh-sinks’ to Division members, after Col. Sink—south of the blown Zon bridge and the 502nd fighting at Best. Shortly after noon the 506th made contact with a British Household Cavalry scout unit just north of Eindhoven—eighteen hours behind schedule. The German front line had proved harder to break through than predicted; exposed on the single embanked road, the Shermans of the Guards Armoured Division were hideously vulnerable to the SS artillery and tanks. The 506th men told the British to use the telephone system and call up to find out what equipment would be needed to repair the Zon bridge. This they did, and a little after 7pm British armour and engineers reached the temporary bridge.

At noon on 18 September the last chance to capture an intact bridge across the Wilhelmina Canal was lost when the Germans blew up the Best bridge. The 502nd troopers were so close that flying bridge fragments wounded many of them.

Outside Best a German grenade landed in a trench filled with wounded. Private Joe E. Mann, his wounded arms bandaged to his sides, fell on the grenade to protect the other wounded. An officer ran to his side in time to hear him mutter, ‘My

Divisional infantry moves up towards Bastogne past a retreating column of US armour—Ardennes, December 1944. From helmet markings they would appear to be men of the 506th Parachute Infantry. (US Army)

back’s gone’, and watch him die. Private Mann was awarded the Medal of Honor.

The second 101st Division airborne drop was due at 2pm, 18 September, and the 450 gliders arrived on time. North of Zon glider pilots found low ground haze and rain. Flak was still heavy around Best; one glider filled with ammunition was hit and completely disappeared in an instant flash. Three other gliders were virtually torn apart by bullets. Still, 428 gliders filled with 2,656 men complete with jeeps and trailers touched down fairly safely. After the gliders were down, bombers flew over dropping supplies. (Less than half the dropped equipment was recovered by the Division, however. Much of it fell into German hands around Best. The loss of this equipment, especially petrol, ammunition and food, was to have serious consequences for the Division.) The 327th ran right off the gliders and straight into action, supporting the 502nd.

Throughout the night of the 18th-19th, Royal Engineers worked on a Bailey bridge at Zon. The

job was finished in the early morning hours. At 6.45am the first British armour crossed the Wilhelmina Canal at Zon, nearly forty-eight hours behind schedule. After a three-day battle Best was freed on 19 September. Behind them the Germans left 300 dead, 1,000 prisoners and sixteen 88mm guns.

First-Lieutenant Edward L. Wierzbowski, whose platoon of Co. H, 502nd made the first attack on the Best bridge, found himself a prisoner after all his men but three were wounded and out of ammunition. The Germans took him and his men to a hospital. The rest of the 502nd pushed by the hospital before the Germans realized what was going on outside. Quickly the lieutenant disarmed the medics and took them prisoner.

After taking Best the 502nd and 327th established defensive positions there. Reinforcements, especially the much-needed Division artillery, were due in on the 19th. But rain and overcast weather, which had begun the day before, continued. The

mission came in as planned, but bad weather, heavy flak and a sudden appearance by the Luftwaffe tore up the squadrons. Only 1,341 out of 2,310 troops due to arrive were set down in the Division's area; only forty out of sixty-eight artillery pieces were successfully brought in.

Hardly had the Germans given up Best when they sent in a strong Panzer force towards the newly opened Zon bridge in an attempt to cut the road. The 1/327th and assorted other troops there knocked out one Panther with bazooka fire and an anti-tank gun, just as the big tank had almost reached the bridge. Several other tanks behind it were also knocked out, and the Germans called off that attack.

Staff-Sergeant Charles Dohun went looking for his company commander, Capt. LeGrand Johnson, after Best fell. He found him, shot in the left shoulder and head, lying in the 'dead pile' at an aid station. The sergeant had promised Johnson he wouldn't die and vowed to keep that promise now. He burst into an aid tent where a Medical Corps officer was working on wounded. 'Major,' he said,

Airborne troops coming in from an outpost on the Bastogne perimeter on 26 December 1944. (US Army)



‘my captain needs attention right away.’

‘I’m sorry, sergeant,’ the doctor said. ‘We’ll get to him. He’ll have to wait his turn.’

‘Major, he’ll die if you don’t look at him quick.’

The major looked across the bloody operating table in front of him. He had been there for hours, cleaning, patching and operating. ‘We’ve got lots of injured men here,’ he said. ‘Your captain will be attended to as soon as we get to him.’

Slowly Dohun drew the heavy .45 automatic from his brown leather holster. Slowly he pulled back the receiver, loading and cocking it, and, with both hands, aimed it straight at the major’s face. ‘It’s not soon enough,’ he said. ‘Major, I’ll kill you right where you stand if you don’t look at him right away.’

The major stared at the sergeant in amazement. With a quick flick of his wrist, he sent out several medics to pick up Johnson. They brought him right in, and the doctor went to work. A transfusion and an operation later, he was able to tell the sergeant, who was still standing there gun in hand, that Capt. Johnson would live—he’d have quite a headache, but he’d live.

At that, Dohun turned over his gun and a still upset major sent him under military police custody to his battalion command post. Lieutenant-Colonel Chappuis heard the story and then told Dohun, ‘I’m placing you under arrest for exactly one minute.’ The two stood there while the colonel stared at his watch. A minute up, he handed the .45 back to the sergeant. ‘Dismissed,’ he said. ‘Now get back to your unit.’

On the 20th, German tanks again attacked the Zon bridge. Again they almost took the bridge, but a combination of British armour and Airborne small arms kept them off. The fighting so close to the road—nicknamed ‘Hell’s Highway’ by its ‘Screaming Eagle’ defenders—kept supplies from moving north and disrupted the original schedule.

On the 22nd the Germans attacked the road north of Veghel. If they could win there, four bridges would fall into their hands and the road would be totally cut. Luckily, Dutch Underground members, among the most organized and dedicated in Europe, spotted armour moving towards Veghel and warned the 101st. Twice within four hours, Panzers and infantry cut the five-mile stretch of road. With the aid of British armour and



A rare snapshot taken by one of Bastogne’s defenders, looking out over the German lines.

artillery it was reopened, and none of the bridges fell to the Germans. At Uden, four miles north of Veghel, the Germans not only cut the road but dug in on both sides of it. The 101st sent men north and the British 32nd Guards Brigade sent men south; after a fierce fight, the road was again open to traffic. However, for twenty-four hours not one vehicle could get north along the only road to Arnhem.

The final parts of the Division arrived on 23 September; the weather finally improved. The Germans also came on the 23rd, attacking Veghel, but were driven off by 2pm. Fighting around Uden continued, however, for two days. The road was not totally reopened until the 26th.

On the 25th the reeling survivors of the British 1st Airborne Division, which had fought so long and hard, were withdrawn; the division had suffered 80 per cent casualties. The drive over the Rhine had failed. The Allies now had a fifty-mile-long road going exactly nowhere, and still under constant pressure.

The fighting wasn’t over for the 101st, however. On 2 October the Division was sent north past Nijmegen to the island between the Waal and lower Rhine rivers. The Division’s mission there was to turn west and drive the Germans away from the road leading to Arnhem. It was accomplished by more tough fighting, especially around the small railway-stop of a town called Opheusden. There the dug-in 506th and 327th, with Tommies of 5th Battalion, Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry, stopped the 363rd Volksgrenadier Division from clearing the island of Allies.



On the Bastogne perimeter two soldiers of the 101st examine a knocked-out German StuG III assault gun, while another burns fiercely in the left background.

On 27 November 1944, after taking total losses in 'Market-Garden' of 2,118 all ranks, including Colonels Cole and Johnson, the 101st Airborne Division was withdrawn from the lines. The Division was sent to Camp Mourmelon, France, near Rheims. The men were beat. In the three weeks after reaching Mourmelon two men, a staff officer and a master sergeant, put pistols to their heads and killed themselves. However, with clean clothes, hot food and comfortable quarters, it didn't take the 'Screaming Eagles' long to snap back. Pretty soon athletic teams were organized, and everyone began to look forward to Christmas. General Taylor flew off to Washington for top-level conferences on 9 November. The entire Division planned a special Christmas Eve ball. A dance hall was hired and decorated with brightly coloured parachutes. On Christmas Day the 506th would play football against the 502nd in the 'Champagne Bowl', and game programmes were printed. While the Division was making its plans, however, Adolf Hitler was making some of his own. The two plans would conflict.

Bastogne

Hitler's plan was simple. Four armies, newly re-equipped, would smash through the heavily wooded, weakly defended Ardennes. Once through, they would cross the Meuse River, using captured Allied petrol, and drive to Antwerp. This drive would cut the British and American forces apart and lead to a second Dunkirk. Bad weather was vital, so that the Allies couldn't take advantage of their vast air superiority.

The Allied defenders of the Ardennes were four divisions, two of which had just taken a terrible mauling in the Hürtgen Forest, and the other two of which were untried. The Allies knew that the Ardennes was a weak area on their long front lines, but they thought the Germans were incapable of launching any major attack. General Bradley had actually expressed the wish that the Germans would launch a counter-attack so that they would suffer heavy casualties. He didn't wish for a counter-attack of quite the size Hitler had in mind.

One of the advantages of the Ardennes from the

German point of view was its heavy, protecting forests. The same factor, however, could be a disadvantage, since in order for the attack to work the Germans would have to take and hold a number of vital crossroads or be forced to send large troop formations down tiny trails and back roads. One such crossroads was in the town of Bastogne.

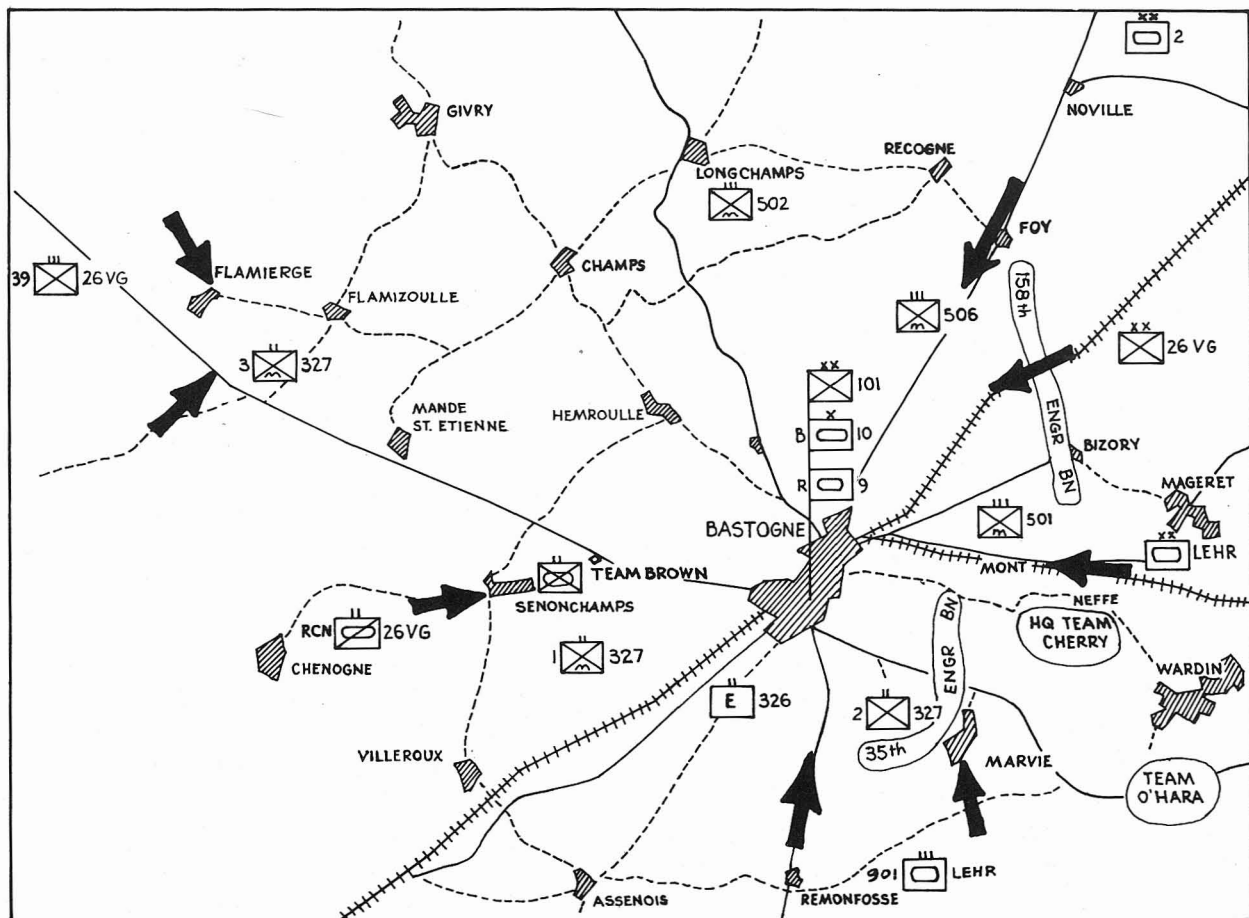
The German plan called for the 26th Volksgrenadier Division to drive straight into Bastogne, already captured by the Panzer Lehr Division. The Panzer Lehr would come into the town from the south and then push on towards the Meuse. If the Panzer Lehr couldn't take the town easily—and there was no real reason why they shouldn't—they were to ignore it and continue their westward advance. At the same time the 2nd Panzer Division would pass through Noville, north of Bastogne. It, too, was to continue west, but could supply troops if Bastogne was too hard a nut to crack.

First reports of the German attack on 16 December 1944 fell on disbelieving ears, but as further news of a major breakthrough arrived, a

real picture of what was happening began to develop. The road net obviously was the key. General Eisenhower looked over his list of reserves. 'Among those most readily accessible', he later wrote, 'was the XVIII Airborne Corps under Gen. Ridgeway, located near Rheims. It included the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, both battle-tested formations of the highest calibre. They had shortly before been heavily engaged in the fighting in Holland, and were not yet fully rehabilitated. Moreover, they were relatively weak in heavy supporting weapons, but these Bradley felt he could supply from the unthreatened portion of his long line.'

Bradley decided Bastogne had to be held at all costs. He ordered elements of the 10th Armored Division to reinforce elements of the 9th Armored Division already there. Then he put in a phone call to Camp Mourmelon. Since Taylor was away, Gen.

Sketch map of the Bastogne area during the siege of December 1944.





A 75mm pack howitzer crew of Battery C, 463rd Parachute Field Artillery, in action at Bastogne, 6 January 1945. (US Army)

McAuliffe was acting divisional commander. He was told to move to Werbomont, Belgium, first thing the next morning. 'All I know of the situation', McAuliffe told his assembled staff officers, 'is there has been a breakthrough and we have got to get up there.'

On the morning of the 18th McAuliffe went ahead of the Division in his jeep to see what was happening. He decided to stop by Maj.-Gen. Troy Middleton's VIII Corps headquarters at Bastogne, turning towards that town at Bois de Herbaumont, thirty miles south-west of Werbomont. A military police sergeant at that crossroads saw the general and recognized him as the 101st Artillery commander. By 4pm McAuliffe was at Middleton's headquarters, finding staff personnel rushing about loading maps and files into lorries. Once in Middleton's office, McAuliffe was told that orders had been changed and he was to rush the 101st to Bastogne's defence. McAuliffe checked his maps and decided to assemble the Division at Mande St Etienne.

While McAuliffe was at Corps headquarters, the Division got under way to Werbomont. The roads

were clogged; the 82nd Airborne was using the same roads to get to their new position, and the march was slow. At Bois de Herbaumont Col. Thomas L. Sherburne, in charge of Division Artillery, leaned out of his jeep and asked a military police sergeant if he'd seen any 101st troopers earlier. It turned out to be the same sergeant who had seen McAuliffe, and he told Sherburne that the general had gone to Bastogne, not Werbomont. Sherburne, who in McAuliffe's absence was acting divisional commander, decided to follow his chief, who, he figured, must have new instructions. He told the MP to direct the rest of the column to Bastogne, and started after McAuliffe himself.

By the evening of the 18th the Division's command post was set up in a schoolhouse outside Bastogne. Colonel Ewell, who had taken over the 501st after Col. Johnson's death, reported that it was unlikely his regiment could get through that traffic and be in Bastogne before 11pm that night. By midnight, however, a sizeable part of the Division was near Bastogne.

At 6am, 19 December, the Division was ordered to make a careful northward advance to feel out the enemy. That morning, however, German armour crashed through the 9th Armored holding Magret, near Bastogne. More reinforcements arrived in the shape of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion



A 501st Parachute Bn., Fort Benning, 1941





B Normandy, 6 June 1944





C Operation 'Market-Garden', Holland, September 1944



FIELD RATION #1
OTHER INFO



D Defence of Bastogne, December 1944



4



5



1



8



2



9



3



6



10



7

from Liège. At 6am, as the troopers were moving out, the Germans attacked armoured units in Noville, north of Bastogne. Under shellfire, the defenders fell back to a defensive line on the town's outskirts. Two enemy tanks poking about their lines at about 8.30am were put out of action. The main attack on Noville came at 10.30am, and involved more than thirty enemy tanks. They got to within two hundred yards of American lines, and the armoured troops requested permission to withdraw to Foy. Permission was denied, and the troops held on. The 1/506th was then sent to Noville as reinforcements, while the 2/506th and 3/506th held the high ground near Foy.

The Division moved its headquarters into Bastogne proper and prepared to hold it. The 2/501st was sent to take Bizory, where they dug in. The battalion was then sent, at about noon, to retake Mageret, which would put the Germans at Neffe in a trap. Heavy fire stopped them. The 3/501st was sent to Mont, with its Co. I going on to Wardin. There the company was hit by armour and virtually destroyed.

By 4pm Ewell decided his regiment couldn't get any further east along the Longvilly road, and that the Germans on his front were getting ready for a major attack on Bastogne itself. Prisoners and material from dead Germans on the 501st front identified the units facing them as from the 2nd Panzers, 26th Volksgrenadiers and Panzer Lehr. Armed with this intelligence, Ewell drove back to Division headquarters and received permission to withdraw at night to better defensive positions.

At Noville Col. LaPrade, promoted after Arnhem to command the 1/506th, assumed command of the town's defence. He was killed almost immediately and Maj. Robert F. Harwick, 1/506th executive officer, took over. Colonel Sink, fearing overwhelming odds, called McAuliffe and told him, 'We can't possibly hold on to the town. I want to pull my first battalion back nearer Foy.' McAuliffe told him to hold on while he checked with Middleton. Middleton flatly refused to allow the pull-back. 'If we are going to hold on to Bastogne', he told McAuliffe, 'you cannot keep falling back.'

Meanwhile, the 502nd went into position to the left of the 506th and the 327th was given a position slightly to the right, supporting the 501st. On the

Division's east one of the armour combat teams, 'O'Hara', withdrew to the high ground north of Marvie, while another team, 'Cherry', fell back to Mont. About midnight the Division hospital on the Sprimont intersection fell into German hands. The Germans started killing the wounded, but hospital personnel got in their way, defending their patients. The annoyed Germans then gave them half an hour to load the wounded on lorries to be taken to the German rear. With the loss of the hospital, the only Division medical supplies were in battalion first-aid stations.

In the early morning hours of 20 December, Co. B, 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion was sent as a reserve to the 2/501st at Bizory. The company was in position by 2am, in time to stop a German attack. There was a thin mist on the 501st front on that morning of the 20th. From quite a distance the defenders were able to see German infantry, supported by two tanks—a Mark V and a Mark IV—and two self-propelled guns, moving towards them. 'Fire,' the yell went up, and the 501st front exploded. In a quick exchange the Germans knocked out one of the tank destroyers, but the others struck back to put the enemy armour out of action. The German infantrymen hit the ground for cover as US artillery poured a twenty-minute-long barrage onto them. Later, prisoners reported the attackers were from the 2/76th Infantry Regiment, 26th Volksgrenadiers.

After daybreak the Germans launched yet another attack on Noville, which they had now cut off. An anti-aircraft platoon had been ordered to reinforce the Noville garrison, but found the road cut north of Foy. As Panzers smashed into Noville's outskirts, the 321st Glider Field Artillery Battalion laid protective fire on the enemy with their 75mm pack howitzers. The range was too great for the 105mm howitzers in Bastogne.

The 3/502nd was ordered to relieve Noville. The battalion couldn't cut its way through, and by noon Noville's weary defenders pulled out and headed down the road to Foy. Although the morning air had been clear, a heavy fog had set in by noon, which hid the fleeing paratroopers and some reached friendly lines safely; others were ambushed only 500 yards from Foy. The 1/506th lost 13 officers and 199 enlisted men at Noville.

The Division was also having trouble at Marvie.



German PzKw V Panther tank knocked out among the defences of Bastogne. The split muzzle suggests either a freak hit or, much more likely, deliberate destruction after the tank had been immobilized.

The 2/327th had been ordered into the town, replacing the engineers who had been its earlier defenders. Around 11.25am the Germans laid a heavy artillery barrage on the town, followed by an attack with self-propelled guns, four tanks and six half-tracks. The defenders' 37mm guns were unable to pierce the thick German armour, but two American medium tanks cracked two Mark IV Panzers and a half-track, killing their crews. One Panzer then fled, while the rest came on. A bazooka man hit a self-propelled gun, and then another hit a tank. The last of the Panzers pulled back, and the American glider men started back through the town, routing out Germans hiding in the buildings.

Despite this setback, the battle seemed to be going in the Germans' favour. The high command reported to Hitler that 'We shall take Bastogne tonight.' While Hitler was receiving this good news, a 101st Division staff conference was being held on

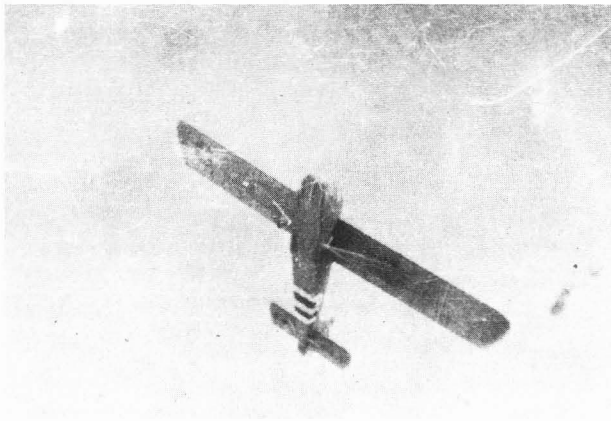
the evening of the 20th to decide if the Division should stay or get out. After thinking it over, McAuliffe told his men, 'I am staying.' He then drove to VIII Corps headquarters to announce that Bastogne would be held. 'Now don't get yourself surrounded, Tony,' Middleton said before McAuliffe returned to Division headquarters.

Hardly had McAuliffe returned when the Germans, to make their boast true, attacked the 1/501st and 506th on the Longvilly Road and at Mont. The attack hit a lucky spot, where the battalion sectors were supposed to overlap but actually did not. As daylight was fading and the fog was getting thicker, Co. A, 1/501st, sent out a patrol to find the 506th. Instead they found Germans, just coming in to the attack. Opening fire before the Germans spotted them, they cut down almost two companies. The enemy returned fire, and mortars from both sides joined in. In the heavy fog, where no man could see his neighbour, both sides thought they were taking enormous losses. The Americans, fearing they might be outflanked, withdrew south-east of the tracks near the Bizory-Foy road. The

Germans, obviously equally shaken, advanced no further that night.

At about 7pm the main German attack of 20 December began. It was announced by a barrage hitting the entire 501st line from Bizory south to Mont. As the shellfire died down, some fifteen Panthers attacked, supported by Panzer Lehr infantry. McAuliffe called in fire from the eleven artillery battalions under his command, catching the tanks in the open and smashing a number of them. Machine gun fire cut down the German infantry. Some 2,000 rounds of .50 cal. ammunition were fired in only a few minutes, but the attack was broken up. The only place it was partially successful was against the 3/501st. That battalion was caught in a cross fire, and fell back to a bend in the dirt road running down the slope from the south end of the village. There, supported by a platoon of Co. B, 5th Tank Destroyer Battalion, it held on. The Germans were stopped.

The next morning brought a change in the weather. Temperatures fell and great white clouds whipped in from the north. Patrols around the lines brought in the word that for the first time the



Rare snapshot, taken by a 101st trooper inside Bastogne, showing a Waco resupply glider passing overhead.

Division was completely cut off and surrounded. German guns, in a ring about the besieged city, could lay their rounds anywhere in the defenders' lines. This did not bother the Division unnecessarily; it was a normal problem for airborne troops.

At 8.15am on 21 December, Companies A and C, 1/506th, were sent to fill in the gap between the 506th and 501st near the German-held Halt

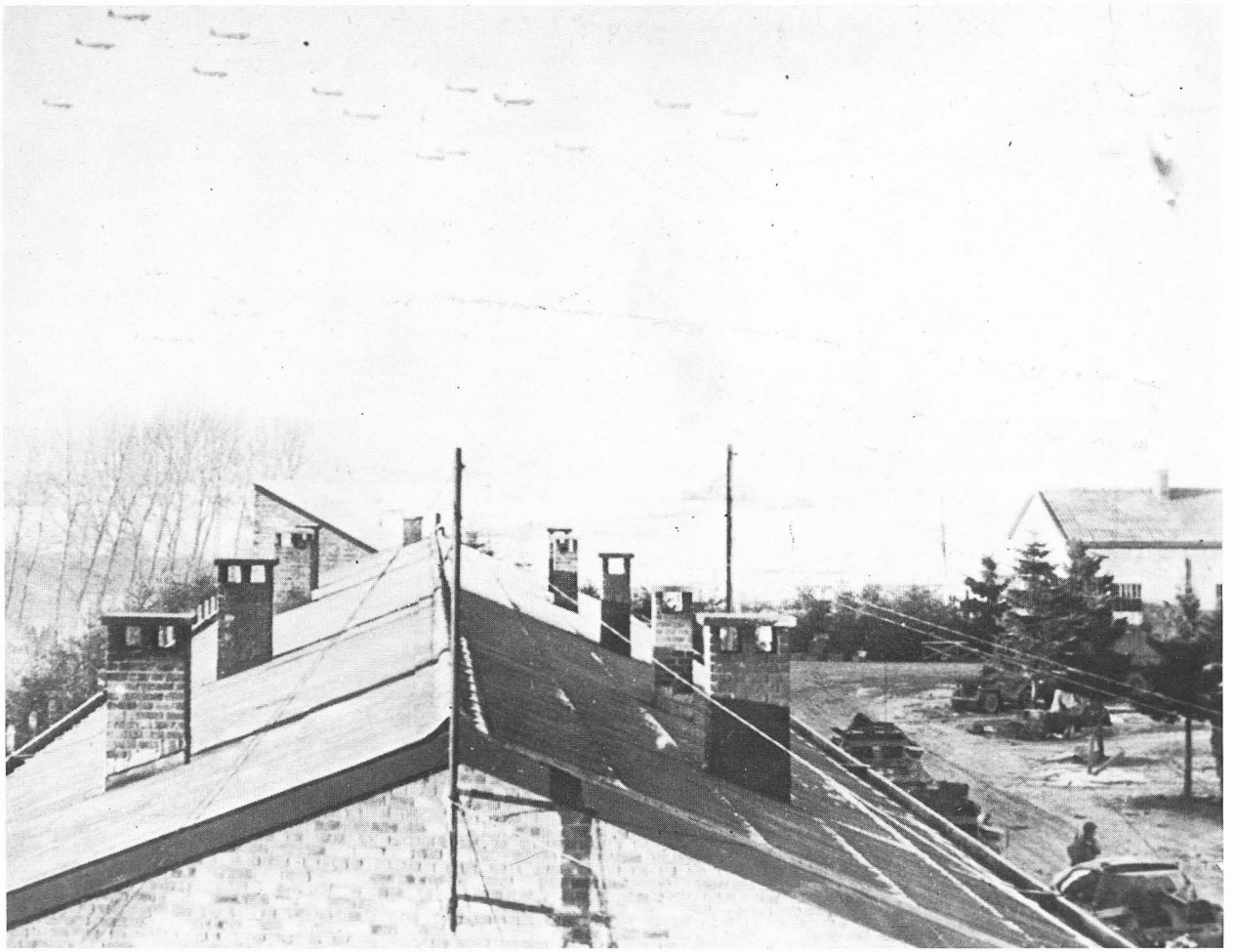
railway station. As they reached this point they saw, to their amazement, a German column advancing towards them, guns slung and men laughing. Dropping, the paratroopers opened fire on the Germans, who thought they were other Germans in an already captured area. Some fifty-five Germans were killed and a hundred—from the 26th Volksgrenadiers—were captured. This was the last major action in the siege involving the 501st and 506th.

Company B, 327th, was assigned to take the German barricade at the Sprimont intersection and hold it for a possible overland supply train. The company surprised the defenders there and set up their own barricade. There they found the remains of the Division hospital, with two dead paratroopers nearby, their throats cut. On the morning of the 21st the 2nd Panzer Division, not knowing that the Sprimont intersection had fallen earlier that morning, ran into the 327th road-block. The glider men opened fire with seven 75mm guns. Nine halftracks and six light vehicles were destroyed by their fire. Two tanks came up from the sides to outflank the road-block, but one withdrew when the other was set on fire by a bazooka rocket. Towards evening the road-block was ordered abandoned, but the 2nd Panzer crews moved a great deal more carefully after that. The road-block was withdrawn because Division headquarters learned overland supply was impossible. 'Visualize a hole in a doughnut,' said Lt.-Col. Harry W. O. Kinnard, Division operations officer. 'That's us.'

Towards the evening of the 21st, snow began to fall.

That night, at about 1am, there occurred one of those strange incidents which sometimes stick in soldiers' memories. Men of a number of different outfits reported seeing a silent squad of eleven men slowly walking around the American lines. None appeared armed, nor did they show any signs of caution. They seemed so self-assured nobody challenged them, but later nobody could ever explain who they were.

By daybreak on the 22nd, two inches of snow lay on the ground. Heavy coats and overboots were collected from headquarters personnel and passed out to men on the front. Virtually the only medicine still available was cognac. Local inhabitants were



An indistinct but historic photo of a large formation of C-47s arriving over Bastogne with supplies for the hard-pressed garrison. (US Signal Corps)

asked to make camouflage garments from their sheets and white tablecloths.

At about 11.30am a small German group under a white flag appeared in front of Co. F, 327th. A blindfolded German officer was delivered to headquarters, where he handed a piece of paper to German-speaking Col. Ned Moore. Moore glanced over the paper: it was a demand for the town's surrender.

'What does it say, Ned?' asked McAuliffe.

'They want you to surrender,' Moore replied.

McAuliffe grimaced. 'Aw, Nuts,' he said.

The General then told his assembled staff that he thought they were giving the Germans 'one hell of a beating', and that the ultimatum was 'way out of line'.

'Well,' he finally said, 'I don't know what to tell them.'

Kinnard looked up. 'That first crack you made would be hard to beat, General.'

'What was that?'

'Nuts!'

The general snapped his fingers. 'That's it,' he said, and dictated just that message.

The German officer, who had been waiting at the Co. F command post, read the message with some confusion. 'Is that reply negative or affirmative?' he asked. 'If it is in the latter, I will negotiate further.'

Colonel Joseph H. Harper, 327th commander, enlightened him: 'The reply is decidedly not affirmative. If you continue this foolish attack your losses will be tremendous.' And with that the Germans were shown back to their lines.

That evening Hitler learned of the American reply. 'I should like to see the German general who

would fight on with the same stubborn, tough resistance in a situation which seemed just as hopeless,' he told his staff.

The evening of the 22nd was quiet except for a small attack about 4pm on the Arlon road. Two platoons beat it off easily. But the evening also brought bad news to the Division. The air resupply mission was cancelled because of icing on airplane wings. The night was bitterly cold, temperatures reaching a low of 10°F.

The order went out to the 26th Volksgrenadier divisional commander, Maj.-Gen. Heinz Kokott, that Bastogne must be taken. On the morning of the 23rd he launched an attack with twelve tanks on Co. C of the 327th. The attack was stopped, but at a cost of two tank destroyers.

During the day a fleet of 240 C-47s flew over the town, dropping much-needed supplies. Some 95 per cent of the 144 tons of supplies were recovered by the Division. The Germans, who couldn't see what landed under the parachutes, thought Bastogne was being reinforced.

At twilight the Germans hit the 327th position again. At the same time they overran Flamierge, capturing the aid station, knocking out anti-tank guns and blowing up stocks of mortar ammunition. The 3/327th fell back to a line between Mande St Etienne and Bastogne. 'This is our last withdrawal,' the battalion commander told his men. 'Live or die—this is it!'

The attack was joined at about 5.30pm by Panzer Lehr Division tanks and infantry, heading towards Marvie. By a fluke an American half-track which was retreating was mistaken for a charging German one, and knocked out by an American bazooka man. The ruined half-track blocked the narrow road up which the Germans were trying to force their way. Shortly after 7pm the Germans overran Hill 500, some 500 yards south-west of

A Douglas C-47, named 'Ain't Misbehavin'', brought down by German flak but successfully crash-landed inside the Bastogne perimeter.





Unloading supplies dropped by parachute. The man on the right holds a field ration 'breakfast unit', while the Technician 5th Class on the left holds a red smoke grenade. (US Army)

Marvie. House-to-house fighting then broke out in Marvie. The Americans reinforced the town with some artillery, and troops from the 10th Armored's 'Team Cherry'.

The intelligence reaching Kokott's headquarters was confused and the general was told Marvie, and not Hill 500, had fallen. He ordered more men to go through the town, although a push over Hill 500 would have put the Germans in Bastogne itself. As the Volksgrenadiers entered Marvie from the south, 10th Armored Sherman's came in from the west and north. A Sherman knocked out a Panzer on Marvie's main street, further blocking the attackers' way. At that point the momentum went out of the German attack. With his attack now in ruins, Kokott ordered his troops back, planning a

major attack from the north-west, where the ground was better for tanks, on Christmas Day. By the morning of the 24th most of Marvie was back in American hands.

Christmas Eve was fairly quiet. A Roman Catholic Mass was held in Bastogne and McAuliffe told his men, 'We are giving our country and loved ones at home a worthy Christmas present, and, being privileged to take part in this gallant feat of arms, are truly making for ourselves a Merry Christmas.'

At 3am on Christmas Day the Luftwaffe bombed Bastogne, and shortly afterwards the Germans hit the 1/502nd at Champs, beginning their main attack. Around 5am reports of eighteen white-camouflaged Panzer Mark IVs near Mande St Etienne reached headquarters. The tanks led the main attack, which fell on the area between the 3/327th and the 1/502nd.

The defenders' tank destroyers couldn't stop the

heavily armoured Panzers, which broke through easily. Behind them came infantry, many of them apparently drunk. By 7.15am the tanks were in front of Hemroulle. Men of the 463rd Field Artillery Battalion formed a skirmish line with their 75mm guns. After the breakthrough the tanks and infantry split. Some swung left towards the 1/502nd, while others continued towards Bastogne. Those driving into the 502nd sector ran into a makeshift line of cooks, clerks and drivers, while the rest of the battalion formed a line from the Champs-Hemroulle-Bastogne road. Several tanks were knocked out by this motley band while others charged into a hidden tank destroyer position, where they were destroyed by fire from the flank. The other half of the assault group ran into the 1/327th and 321st Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, which drove it off. By 9am the whole attack was finished, and the Germans were hurried on their way by fighters from the 9th US Air Force. That afternoon another supply drop raised the defenders' spirits.

At 4am on 26 December the Germans hit the 3/327th at a point where that unit had only one anti-tank gun, which was quickly overcome. The men stood their ground and stopped the enemy armour with bazookas, stalling the attack. After the fiasco



One of Bastogne's defenders who fell during the heavy attack on the Bois Jacques on 10 January 1945. (US Army)

of the 25th, Kokott wanted to call off further attacks, but was refused permission. He was forced to send in his troops piecemeal. Another attack against the 3/327th was driven off, but only after artillery cracked the tanks which led the attempt.

On the same day the Luftwaffe mounted their largest attack against the besieged garrison; but the end of the ordeal was in sight. McAuliffe admitted

to his staff, 'It has been touch and go at times. But the situation definitely is improving, especially now that the clear weather is permitting air operations.' That afternoon found the 4th Armored Division's Combat Command R four miles south of Bastogne. They pushed on through Assenois, penetrating German lines, and at 4.45pm men of the 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion made contact with their first friends from the outside.

Although the 4th Armored Division's arrival meant that the city was no longer surrounded, the Germans continued their unsuccessful attacks. Bastogne's defence, even after its relief, gave the Division some of its toughest fighting of the whole campaign. On 3 January 1945 the Division went into the attack, only to meet a German attack which tore through the 502nd's lines before it was stopped. Another the next day was also stopped. On the 13th the Division returned to the attack, driving through Foy and taking Noville on 15 January. Corps headquarters returned to Bastogne and, in a 'mock-formal' ceremony, Corps presented the Division with a receipt on 18 January: 'Received from the 101st Airborne Division the town of Bastogne, Luxembourg Province, Belgium. Condition: used but serviceable, kraut-disinfected.'

On 14 February the Division went into defensive positions near Hagenau on the Moder River. On 1 March it was withdrawn to Camp Mourmelon, where it was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation—the first division so honoured.

On 2 April the Division moved to the Rhine below Neuss. It crossed the Rhine on 25 April, and began a mad dash across southern Germany through Merchingen, Ulm, Memmigen, Kaufbeuren and Wolfratshausen to Miesbach and, on 5 May 1945, Berchtesgaden. Other troops got to the town first, but the 'Screaming Eagles', appropriately enough, got to occupy Hitler's summer chancellery, the Eagle's Nest.

Not much opposition was met in Germany, but because the Division hadn't enough transport many men had uncomfortable rides in cattle lorries. The Division took so many eager-to-surrender Germans that it couldn't leave enough men to guard them all. Instead, they left them with their own officers under orders to report to POW camps.



Their ordeal at Bastogne over, men of the 501st move out after the Germans shortly after the relief of the bastion. They pass a bullet-scarred road sign identifying the little town they had made famous. (US Army)



Private Jesse Kenner of the 501st Parachute Infantry's HQ Company mans a bazooka beside the road into Foy, 11 January 1945. (US Army)

From Berchtesgaden the Division returned on 1 August to Auxerre, France. The plan was to return the Division to the United States for retraining; before that could happen, however, the Japanese surrendered and the demobilizing process began. On 30 November 1945, the 101st Airborne Division was de-activated.

Organization

When first formed, the 101st was made up of its headquarters, 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, 401st Glider Infantry Regiment and 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. Division artillery was the 377th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 907th Glider Field Artillery Battalion. Service units were the 101st Airborne Signal Company, 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion, 426th Airborne Quartermaster Company and 326th Airborne Medical Company.

Before Normandy the Division was enlarged. Now it was made up of the 501st, 502nd and 506th Parachute Infantry Regiments, and the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, which had the single-battalion 401st Glider Infantry under its command. Division artillery was the 377th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 321st and 907th Glider Artillery Battalions. Support troops were the headquarters company, 81st Airborne Anti-aircraft Battalion, 101st Airborne Parachute Maintenance Company, 801st Airborne Ordnance Company, 326th Airborne Medical Company,



Against a backdrop of wrecked houses and damaged vehicles in Noville, 16 January 1945, General Taylor and his regimental commanders study their maps. Note helmet markings. (US Army)

326th Airborne Engineer Battalion and the Division band. The Division was joined by the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion before Bastogne. In 1945 the 1/401st Glider Infantry was redesignated as the 3/327th.

Each parachute infantry regiment had a headquarters company, a service company and three battalions. Each battalion had a headquarters and three rifle companies. The 327th had a headquarters company, a service company and the 1/327th, 2/327th and 1/401st. Each glider battalion had a headquarters company, a heavy weapons company and three rifle companies.

The parachute field artillery battalions each had a headquarters and service battery, an anti-aircraft and anti-tank battery and three howitzer batteries. The glider artillery battalions each had a headquarters and a service battery and three howitzer

batteries. The 81st Anti-aircraft had a headquarters and service battery, three anti-tank batteries and three automatic weapons batteries. The 326th Airborne Engineers had a headquarters and service company, a parachute engineer company and a glider engineer company.

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The Plates

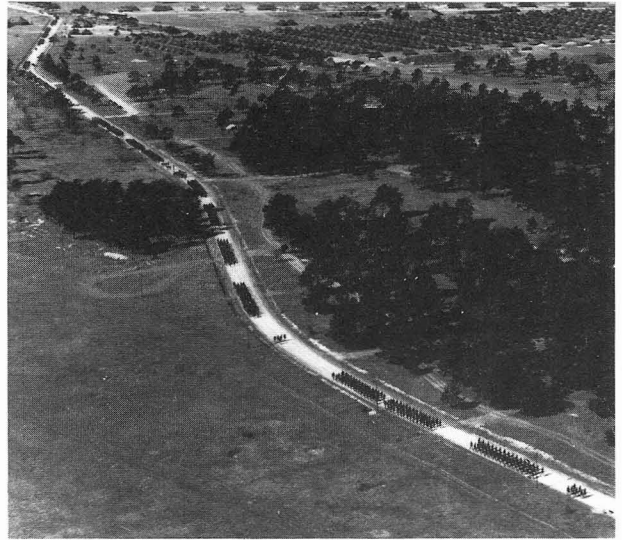
A 501st Parachute Battalion, Fort Benning, Georgia, 1941

A trooper of the 501st Parachute Battalion stands in front of a Curtiss C-46 transport aircraft which was used until replaced by the Douglas C-47. The C-46 held 36 to 40 troops. The paratrooper is wearing an early experimental pair of jump overalls made of a shiny sateen. It has special pockets for grenades, pistol magazines and other equipment. Unfortunately it proved impractical in field tests, and was replaced by a two-piece suit. His helmet is a Riddle crash helmet, worn in experimental days but later replaced by a steel helmet. His boots are an early style Corcoran jump boot resembling a standard service boot, but laced taller and made with extra buckled flaps, sponge rubber insoles and thick rubber soles and heels. His main parachute is worn on his back, and a small emergency rig on his chest. Subsequently, the chest pack was fitted horizontally instead of vertically.

A Chief Warrant Officer is talking with him. His cap is the 'overseas' cap, not worn within the Army since World War I. When airborne troops were first raised, writes paratroop pioneer Lieutenant-General William P. Yarborough, 'We resurrected it and identified ourselves by the cap and the round, white-bordered blue patch bearing a displayed white parachute. It was obvious that the once-functional "overseas" cap should not be rendered inoperative by sewing the patch over the right side, in order to accommodate the rank insignia on the left.' Rank badges, such as this officer's, were worn on top of the patch, while enlisted men and non-commissioned officers wore unit crests pinned on the right side of theirs. The cap flaps were edged in gold and black for officers, silver and black for warrant officers, and branch-of-service colours for enlisted men and non-commissioned officers.

His coat is the standard officer's coat, with the Sam Browne belt, which was abandoned after Pearl Harbor. His Division patch is on the left shoulder. The patch dates from 1923 and recalls the eagle

Gun crew from the support company, 1st Bn., 327th Glider Infantry prepare to fire from a concealed position in a barn near Haguenau, 31 January 1945. (US Army)



Troops of the 101st march to a field near Camp Mourmelon, France, on 15 March 1945, for the presentation of the Presidential Unit Citation—the first ever awarded to an entire division. (US Army)

mascot of the American Civil War 8th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment. Three World War I service chevrons are worn on the left forearm.

On his chest is the parachute qualification insignia, designed by General Yarborough. It is backed by an oval of cloth. General Yarborough writes, 'Just prior to the first award of the qualification badge, my wife and I cut out the oval backgrounds for 25 or 30 of the devices. We made two ovals—the first one infantry blue, and superimposed over it another smaller one of artillery red. This left a narrow infantry blue border around the outside outline of the wings, with artillery red showing between the wings and the parachute. The coloured backgrounds ultimately became regimental or battalion identifiers—each outfit had its own combination of colours, stripes, etc., all contained within the original oval size. During World War II the supply system and other more pressing problems resulted in a hiatus in the issue and use of the oval backings.'

The officer wears his regimental crest on his epaulettes, but enlisted men wore theirs on their lapels, where officers wore their branch-of-service insignia. Warrant officers had a special branch-of-service insignia, and a brown-on-gold rank bar.

His trousers are tucked into jump boots, another distinctive mark of the paratrooper.

B Normandy, 6 June 1944

In the dawn of 'D-Day' gliders bearing the 327th land and the men form up, watched by troopers of the 506th. The gliders here are Waco CG-4A models, which held either sixteen men, one jeep and four men or one 75mm pack howitzer and three men. The Division also used Horsa 1 gliders, which had a larger cargo capacity, but the Horsas broke up 'like matchwood' on landing.

The paratroopers are equipped for a long stay. Private Burgett described what he took into Normandy:

'My personal equipment consisted of: one suit of ODs [olive drab clothes] worn under my jump suit—this was an order for everyone—helmet, boots, gloves, main chute, reserve chute, Mae West, rifle, .45 automatic pistol, trench knife, jump knife, hunting knife, machete, one cartridge belt, two bandoliers, two cans of machine gun ammo totalling 676 rounds of .30 ammo, 66 rounds of .54 ammo, one Hawkins mine capable of blowing the track off a tank, four blocks of TNT, one entrenching tool with two blasting caps taped on the outside of the steel part, three first-aid kits, two morphine needles, one gas mask, one canteen of water, three days' supply of K rations, two days' supply of D rations (hard tropical chocolate bars), six fragmentation grenades, one Gammon grenade, one orange smoke and one red smoke grenade, one orange panel, one blanket, one raincoat, one change of socks and underwear, two cartons of cigarettes, and a few other odds and ends.'

The flag patches on the right arms were for quick identification. One of the troopers is a first lieutenant, marked by the silver bar on his helmet and another on his right shirt collar; a branch-of-service insignia (infantry) is worn on the left collar.

The 327th men wear standard infantry combat dress. Note that their Division shoulder patches do not have the upper 'AIRBORNE' tabs; these were not awarded to glider infantry until some months later.

C Operation 'Market-Garden', Holland, September 1944

A lieutenant of the 506th and an Irish Guards major from the British Guards Armoured Division, lead unit of XXX Corps, discuss the deteriorating situation near the Zon bridge. The British officer

wears the black tanker's beret with regimental cap badge; battledress blouse and trousers, the collar worn open over a shirt and tie in the usual manner for officers; and '37 webbing belt with armoured vehicle crew holster and ammunition pouch. Rank crowns in darkened metal appear on the shoulderstraps, the regimental title in white on green on the shoulder tabs, and the Guards Armoured divisional sign on both upper arms. Typical medal ribbons would be the Military Cross, the General Service Medal (for Palestine 1937-39), and the Africa Star. The shooting stick is a typical Guardee affection.

The 506th lieutenant has an officer's rank bar painted on the back of his helmet—NCOs wore horizontal stripes. On the sides are painted the square recognition flash of divisional headquarters; other flashes used included: 501st, diamond; 502nd, heart; 506th, spade; 327th, club; artillery, circle; anti-aircraft, triangle. His weapons include the folding-stock M1A1 .30 cal. carbine, and a .45 cal. automatic. Note the brassard form of stars-and-stripes insignia, a variation on the sleeve patch, sometimes seen in photos.

Jeeps served the lightly equipped airborne units in many capacities—command vehicles, ambulances, recce vehicles, ammunition carriers, and so forth. The star on the front bumper has no unit significance, but appeared on many 101st Division jeeps. In front of it stands a Pfc of the 327th Glider Infantry, wearing the new M1943 field jacket, which by now had partially replaced the old M1941 'windcheater' style worn by the private beyond the jeep. He wears a conventional rank chevron, and note that the divisional sign now bore the 'AIRBORNE' tab in the glider outfits. He holds the standard squad light automatic, the Browning Automatic Rifle, and has a belt of magazine pouches round his waist.

Before landing in Holland the Division received new leg-packs for machine guns, and special quick-release parachute harness buckles. Unfortunately, jump boots were in short supply and many men received standard double-buckle infantry combat

Generals Eisenhower and Taylor inspect men of the 101st following the award ceremony. Note the helmet markings. The troopers wear the blue and gold chest badge of the Citation. (US Army)





(Left to right) Generals Ridgeway, Eisenhower, Taylor, and Brereton at the Unit Citation ceremony. (US Army)

boots—the risk of shroud lines getting caught on these buckles worried veteran paratroopers.

D The Defence of Bastogne, December 1944

On the left, a Technician 5th Class spots the formation of C-47s which will drop badly needed supplies to the 'battered bastards of the Bastogne bastion'. He wears the issue enlisted men's OD overcoat, and black rubber overboots. His helmet marking identifies him as a member of the divisional artillery. His weapons are an M3 'grease gun' and a .45 cal. automatic, and he carries a field telephone and cable. Beyond him is an SCR 300 radio operator. On the right, the crew of one of the Division's 75mm pack howitzers—its stencilled nickname 'Hitler's Headache' is taken from a photo of a 101st howitzer—prepare to fire, surrounded by ammunition and discarded containers. The howitzer broke down into six basic parts which could be

packed and dropped separately and quickly reassembled. It weighed 1,440lb and could fire six rounds a minute out to ranges around 9,760yd. In the foreground are seen the aiming post and the box for the night aiming lamp.

E Insignia

The regimental crests of the Division's infantry regiments are illustrated as (1) 501st Parachute Infantry, (3) 502nd Parachute Infantry, (8) 506th Parachute Infantry, and (10) 327th Glider Infantry. (4) is the parachute qualification badge, awarded for five peacetime or one combat jump; (7) is the glider assault badge, authorized on 14 March 1944 for one combat landing. The stars on these, unofficial but common 'field' additions, refer to the Normandy and 'Market-Garden' landings. Below the Division's shoulder patch (5) is the final insignia worn on the 'overseas cap', in an officer's

version (6). In spring 1943 the old parachute troops patch was combined with one featuring a glider, the new patch being worn by both categories of troops on a blue disc bordered red. At the same time officers were ordered to switch the patch from the left to right side of the cap, leaving the left for rank insignia. Enlisted men and NCOs wore a patch with the glider facing left, so all ranks had the glider facing to the front of the cap.

(2) is the chest insignia of the Distinguished Unit Citation; the 101st was the first entire division to be awarded this honour. General Orders No. 17, War Department, 13 March 1945 cited the Division, Combat Command 'B' of the 10th Armored Division, and Reserve Command of the 9th Armored Division for 'extraordinary heroism and gallantry' at Bastogne, and General Eisenhower

made the presentation at Camp Mourmelon, France, on 15 March 1945.

(9) is the ribbon of the European–African–Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, awarded to all US troops in the ETO, but few could have surpassed the collection of additional emblems for which survivors of the 101st Division's battles qualified. The Bronze Service Arrowheads represent the airborne assault landings NORMANDY and HOLLAND, and the bronze stars the Battle Credits NORMANDY, RHINELAND, ARDENNES–ALSACE and CENTRAL EUROPE.

'Screaming Eagles' reach the Eagle's Nest: on 5 May 1945 men of the 3rd Bn., 506th Parachute Infantry march into Berchtesgaden. (US Army)



Notes sur les planches en couleur

A Un parachutiste du 501st Parachute Battalion en fourniment du saut complet est inspecté par un *Warrant Officer* de la même unité devant un appareil Curtis C-46. Il porte première tenue d'essai—une combinaison verte foncée avec beaucoup de taches, et le casque du parachutiste Riddle lequel fut remplacé plus tard par un casque d'acier. Les bottes sont un premier type de bottes à saut Corcoran. Le *Warrant Officer* porte le 'casquette d'outre-mer' dont l'usage fut renouvelé par les forces aéroportées; la tunique et le pantalon verts de tenue de service avec insignes de grade et de régiment et de division; et la ceinture Sam Browne qui fut plus tard renoncée.

B Normandie, le 6 juin 1944—parachutistes du 506th Battalion dans le premier plan, avec planeurs portant soldats du 327th Battalion atterrissant dans l'arrière-plan. Les parachutistes portent la tenue de combat brune claire développée pour les forces aéroportées, avec pièces d'insignes nationaux sur le bras droit pour identification rapide, et casques d'acier avec courroies spéciales pour parachutistes. L'officier tient une barre de grade marquée sur le casque. Les troupes à planeur portent tenue d'infanterie et fourniment réguliers; à cette date les insignes divisionnaires sur le bras gauche n'étaient pas portés les lettres 'Airborne' au-dessus d'écusson pour troupes à planeur.

C Un lieutenant du 506th Battalion, avec marquage de quartier général divisionnaire sur le casque confère avec un chef de bataillon britannique du bataillon de char d'assaut Irish Guards. Marquages de casque dans la division comprennent un carreau (501st Bn.), un coeur (502nd), un pique (506th), un trèfle (327th), et un cercle (artillerie divisionnaire). Un certain nombre des troupes à planeur dans l'arrière-plan portent le vieux dolman de campagne de 1941, autres le nouveau type vert de 1943. À l'opération d'Arnhem beaucoup de parachutistes d'E.-U. devinrent porter bottes à l'infanterie avec deux boucles à cause d'un manque de bottes à saut.

D Bastogne, décembre 1944—un Technician 5th Class d'artillerie à gauche, et des servants d'un obusier 75mm à droite. Pardessus de distribution régulière sont portés avec bottes à revers de caoutchouc. La mitrailleuse est la 'pompe à graisse' M3. On put laissé tomber l'obusier en parachute en six morceaux et on le put rassembler rapidement.

E Insignes des régiments de la division: (1) 501st Parachute Infantry, (3) 502nd Parachute Infantry, (8) 506th Parachute Infantry, (10) 327th Glider Infantry. (4) et (7) sont le brevet de qualification de parachutiste, et l'insigne d'assaut de fantassin à planeur adjugé pour un atterrissage de combat. (5) est l'insigne d'épaule de la division, et (6) est la dernière version de la pièce portée sur le 'casquette d'outre-mer' par troupes aéroportées. (2) Insigne *Distinguished Unit Citation* portés sur le sein droit. La 101st fut la première division entière qui fut si honorée. (9) Cordon du *European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal*, avec points de flèche pour Normandie et Hollande, et étoiles pour Normandie, Rhénanie, Ardennes-Alsace et Europe Centrale.

Farbtafeln

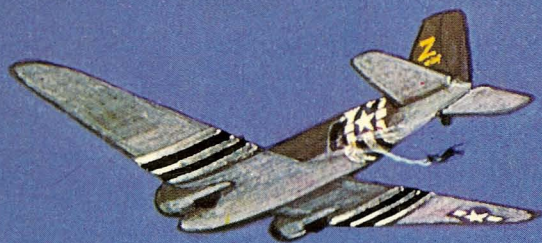
A Ein Fallschirmjäger des 501st Parachute Battalion auf ausführlich Absprungrüstung wird von einem *Warrant Officer* des gleichen Verbands vor einem Curtis C-46 Flugzeug gemustert. Er trägt frühe Versuchsuniform—eine dunkelgrüne Anzug mit vielen Taschen und den Riddle-Helm Fallschirmjägers, den später von einem Stahlhelm ersetzt wurde. Die Stiefel sind eine frühe Mode Corcoran-Absprungstiefel. Der *Warrant Officer* trägt die 'Auslandsmütze', deren Verwendung von den Luftlandtruppen wieder eingeführt wurde; die reguläre grüne Waffenrock und Hose Dienstuniform mit Grad- und Verbands-abzeichen; und der Sam Browne Gürtel, der später aufgegeben wurde.

B Normandie, den 6 Juni 1944—Fallschirmjägers des 506th Battalion im Vordergrund mit Segelflugzeugen tragend Soldaten des 327th Battalion landend im Hintergrund. Die Fallschirmjägers tragen die hellbraune Kampfuniform, die für Luftlandtruppen hervorgebracht wurde, mit nationalen Abzeichen-Tuchstreifen auf dem rechten Ärmel für schnelle. Identifizierung und mit Stahlhelmen auf Spezialriemen für Fallschirmjägers. Der Offizier hat seinen Dienstgradstreifen auf dem Helm aufgezeichnet. Die Segelflugzeugtruppen tragen reguläre Infanterie-Uniform und Ausstattung; die Divisionsabzeichen auf dem linken Ärmel trugen nicht an dieser Zeit die 'Airborne' über dem Schild für Segelflugzeugtruppen.

C Ein Leutnant des 506th Battalion, mit Abzeichen Divisionshauptquartiers auf seinem Helm, beratschlägt mit einem britischen Major des Irish Guards Panzerbataillons. Helmabzeichen der Division schlossen eine Raute (501st Bn.), ein Herz (502nd), ein Pik (506th), einen Eichel (327th), und einen Kreis (Divisionsartillerie) ein. Einige Soldaten der Segelflugzeugtruppen im Hintergrund tragen die alte 1941 Feldjacke, andere tragen die neue grüne 1943 Mode. Bei der Arnhem-Operation mussten viele Fallschirmjägers der Ver. St. Infanteriestiefel mit zwei Schnallen infolge eine Knappheit an Absprungstiefel tragen.

D Bastogne, Dezember 1944—ein *Technician 5th Class* der Artillerie am links, und eine 75mm Haubitzebedienung am rechts. Überröcke regulärer Ausgabe werden mit Gummistulpenstiefeln getragen. Die Maschinenpistole ist das M3 'grease gun'. Die Haubitze konnte man in sechs Stücken von einem Fallschirm abwerfen und sie schnell wieder zusammenbauen.

E Regimentsabzeichen der Divisionsregimente: (1) 501st Parachute Infantry, (3) 502nd Parachute Infantry, (8) 506th Parachute Infantry, (10) 327th Glider Infantry. (4) und (7) sind der Befähigung-Brevet des Fallschirmjägers und das Sturmabzeichen Fussoldaten der Segelflugzeugtruppen, das für eine einzige Kampflandung zuerkannt wurde. (5) sind die Divisionsachselsabzeichen und (6) die letzte Version des Tuchstreifens auf der 'Auslandsmütze' von Luftlandtruppen getragen. (2) *Distinguished Unit Citation* Abzeichen auf der rechten Brust getragen. Die 101st war die erste ganze Division, die so geehrt wurde. (9) Ordensband des *European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal* mit Pfeilspitzen für Normandie und Holland, und Sternen für Normandie, Rheinland, Ardennen-Elsass und Mitteleuropa.



A series of books describing the key units and weapons systems of the Second World War, prepared by leading military experts for the enthusiast and modeller, and illustrating authentic details of uniforms, insignia, armour and supporting vehicles, camouflage, markings and weapons.

Avec annotations en français sur les planches en couleur

Mit Aufzeichnungen auf deutsch über die Farbtafeln

