

## Lest We Forget

In the early morning of 6 June, 1944 as the men of the 116<sup>th</sup> RCT 29<sup>th</sup> Division, were loading into Assault Boats it was still dark and the water rough. Beginning Nautical Twilight would come at 0516, Sunrise at 0558 and low tide at 0530. The tide range at beaches designated Dog White, Red, Green and Easy Red was 18 feet, thus the gentle slope of the tidal flat would cause the boats to ground about 300 yards from any available cover.

The Landing Craft Vehicle/Personnel (LCVP), six to a company carried 31 men each loaded as follows: at the ramp, a section leader + 5 riflemen, 96 rds each (2<sup>nd</sup>) wire cutting team of 4 men (3<sup>rd</sup>) 2 BAR teams, 4 men 900 rds per gun (4<sup>th</sup>) 2 Bazooka teams, 4men, (5<sup>th</sup>) 60mm Mortar team, 4 men w/20 rds each (6<sup>th</sup>) flame thrower team, 2 men (7<sup>th</sup>) demolition team, 5 men w/ pole & pack charges of TNT (8<sup>th</sup>) Medic & Asst Section Leader.

Each man carried: Personal weapon & special equipment plus: gas mask, 9 grenades, ½ pound TNT w/fuze, 6 rations, 2 life preservers (total about 80 pounds). All heavy equipment was lashed to its own life preserver.

Selecting Co. A, 116 RCT as an example, their landing area was Dog Green, a 480 yard stretch of beach directly in front of road D1 leading off the beach to the village of Vierville. Many of the LCVP's drifted East (left) due to the 2.2 Knot Tidal flow. With boats grounded and raked by machine gun, mortar and artillery fire, the men, cold, wet, seasick, cramped and exhausted by rough surf jumped over the side in deep water and some were drowned by their equipment.

Co. A lost one boat swamped 1000 yards out, remaining 5 grounded at H+6 in 4 to 6 feet of surf into a storm of accurate and intense machine gun fire. Another boat received 4 direct mortar hits and disintegrated. Men who reached the beach found no cover and returned to the beach obstacles. All company officers and most of the sergeants were killed or wounded, the wounded drowned in the rising tide. Co. A ceased to exist in 15 minutes.

Support units in 2<sup>nd</sup> wave were hard hit by sea conditions and the enemy, 741st Tank Bn launched 32 floating tanks 6000 yards off shore, 5 made it. Of 32 Army/Navy Special Engineer teams intended to clear beach obstacles, 5 arrived assigned to 16 bulldozers of which 6 arrived, 3 of those immediately disabled by artillery fire.

The 111<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Bn. of the 116<sup>th</sup> was to land on Dog Red opposite exit D3 to Les Moulins at about 0730 in Dukws, Twelve 105mm howitzers w/50 rds each. Five were swamped in first half mile, 4 more sunk in rendezvous area, one turned over starting toward the beach, another sunk by gunfire 500 yards out, the last was transferred to a Rhino <sup>i</sup>barge as the Dukw sank.

Naval gunfire support was hampered by the loss or failure of radios, most due to seawater. In an outstanding effort to provide support the Destroyers Carmick and Satterlee closed on the beach and used their 5" guns to "shoot where the infantry is shooting". Many of the various landing craft used whatever guns they had to fire into obvious enemy strong points.

By D+13 the 116<sup>th</sup> had cleared a major beach strongpoint near Grandcamp, and the beachhead was 15 to 20 miles deep. In that week the 29<sup>th</sup> Division lost 2,440 men.

By D+14 the Engineers at Port -En -Bessin had provided fuel for 67,000 vehicles. By D+22 the M.P.s at the Carantan crossroads had counted 18,836 vehicles passing through and 325,000 men had been landed in France over the beaches.

The U.S. Military Cemetery on the bluff between Vierville and St. Laurent Su Mer holds the bodies of more than nine thousand (9000) soldiers, sailors and airmen who participated in the largest and most costly invasion in history. The bloody battles of Arnhem , the Hurtgen Forest and the Ardennes lie ahead, but an Allied army stands on the Enemy shore. The odds of success were even at best, the weather reduced those chances. The High Command had prepared well, but this battle was won by small unit leaders and individual fighters who overcame unforeseen difficulties with sheer courage and determination.

. The road up through the D-1 Draw to Vierville is named Le Rue de 116 Infantry. They are still holding their objective.

Do not forget them.

