

# THE ALL AMERICAN



**BY TODD ANTON**

**EXCLUSIVE FOR D-DAY MEMORY TOURS**

# INTRODUCTION



**O**n behalf of D-Day Memory Tours I want to congratulate you on choosing an adventure that will profoundly change your life. The

reason you are here is that you are seeking a connection with history, with American sacrifice, and most importantly you are seeking a connection with yourself—well, at least that is what my DDMT experience was for me. For many of us, that connection is because of a WWII family member or WWII mentor in your life that brings a sense of purpose to these hallowed fields and country roads you will explore. For others without this connection, perhaps WWII history has inspired you here.

My passion and affiliation with DDMT, is their vision to personally and emotionally connect you with the history of the “Longest Day.” DDMT is not some corporate packaged “historical Disneyland” style adventure led by a talking head at the front of the bus. DDMT is not some drive from museum to museum arranged around restaurants and hotels.

DDMT is an experience.

I have been a history instructor for over thirty years, earned a Master’s degree in WWII Studies, written five books, advised for movies, podcasts, ESPN, Fox Sports, Fox News, two movies, and interviewed thousands of WWII veterans. Additionally, I served on the Board of Trustees for the National World War II Museum in New Orleans at the invitation of its founders Dr. Stephen



Ambrose and Dr. Nick Mueller. I have found that when history is personal and experiential, you not only remember it, you internalize it and it becomes a part of you. You learn best by doing. You remember best through action. You grow through being pushed to try something new and



The DDMT Team: (Left to right) Oliver, Audrey, JP and Marie Paviot. Audrey, JP and Marie's daughter, are the real angels of the trips. You will love their spirit and passion!

taking risks. That is the American spirit at its best. That is DDMT in operation. What is so amazing is that this education is through the hearts and passion of the French. JP and Marie Paviot and JP's brother Oliver are the owners and visionaries of DDMT.

They have a way of returning the gratitude of liberation by liberating us in some way when we are in France.

Normandy loves the United States. Just wait... you'll see... This love and appreciation await you in Normandy with your DDMT adventure.

Regardless of your reasons for your adventure with DDMT, you will leave the Normandy battlefields different than when

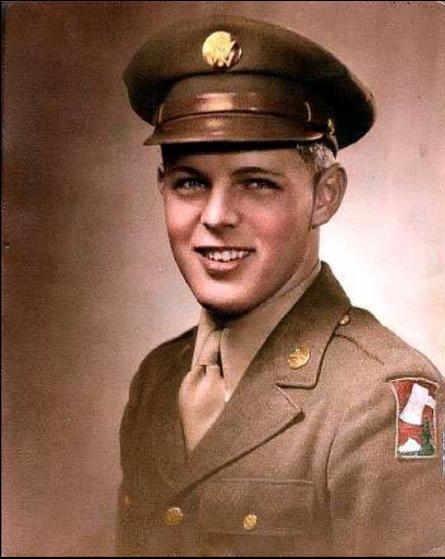


During your visit you will meet the local French population who will share their 1944 experiences with you. With JP being a local, the people trust him.

you arrived. That was definitely true for the U.S. veterans of Normandy back in 1944. The question is what will you do with the experience you are about to go on? Will you share it?

I hope you do. In this way those brave souls resting in countless graves throughout Normandy will live on and their sacrifice is not lost, but remembered and honored.

I was blessed to have two amazing mentors in my life. One was, naturally, my father Lt. Wallace P. Anton of the 70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (left) WWII ETO/Korean War and Arthur “Dutch” Schultz (right) of the famed 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division C/505 PIR. While one mentor was my



beloved heroic father, the other was my mentor after my father’s passing. God put them in my life for a reason. My father died, on of all days June 6, 2002, and Dutch was a Normandy legend who said to me when my dad died... “I can help you deal with loss, after all Todd I saw enough of it.” He did. I am happy share Dutch’s story with you. The



places you will visit with DDMT are places where Dutch most likely fought, suffered, and learned on the early morning of June 6, 1944 that he was... “totally unprepared for this.”

I am excited you will now walk in his steps and the steps of the Greatest Generation with DDMT.

**“IT IS FOOLISH AND WRONG TO MOURN THE MEN WHO DIED. RATHER, WE SHOULD THANK GOD THAT SUCH MEN LIVED.”**

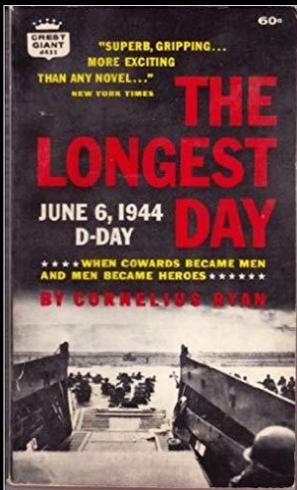
**GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON**

# INTRODUCTION: DUTCH SCHULTZ THE CELEBRITY



Academy Award winning actor Richard Burton and Arthur "Dutch" Schultz played by Richard Beymer in the WWII classic "The Longest Day."

World War history buffs are familiar with various movie classics. Depending on your age, the word "classic" can be misleading now. One such classic movie for me is "The Longest Day" based on the book written by Cornelius Ryan. While Ryan interviewed many veterans, his story was unique as his book showed D-Day from a regular GI's point of view. Ryan let the veterans speak and tell the story as they saw it and as they experienced it. After seeing an advertisement asking for Normandy veterans' accounts in the paper, Dutch Schultz responded to "Connie" Ryan's phone number in the ad and it changed his life forever. Ryan set the template that later historians would follow with the great and legendary Stephen E. Ambrose the most successful.



Dutch's story as the lost paratrooper resounded with many readers and viewers. Somehow Dutch became a symbol for the regular American GI who were all scared, cold, hungry, and just wanted to go home. Because of the success of the book and movie "The Longest Day," Dutch was sought after by authors and media until his passing in 2005.

Dutch became a drug and alcohol counselor later in his life. Schultz worked at the US Army Base nearby Fort Irwin, California and also at our local George Air Force Base in Victorville, California. Dutch suffered from PTSD and suffered his entire life dealing with his demons. This kind gracious and gentle man turned his alcoholism and various tragic experiences in his post war life to some good for many. Working with soldiers to overcome their own nightmares was what inspired Dutch. Additionally, Dutch also worked in

teacher training. That's where I connected with him. I've been teaching history for over thirty years and part of our training is working with and identifying students suffering from drug and alcohol additions. Through one of these sessions at Chapman University, I met Dutch. At the same time, I was collecting and recording oral histories for Dr. Stephen Ambrose and his Eisenhower Center for American Studies in New Orleans. When I realized that such a WWII legend lived and taught near me, I knew I just had to connect with him. I did and it changed my life forever.

His too. He called me his "adopted son." I miss him greatly.



## MEETING THE LEGENDS:

Photo left and above are in Los Angeles left to right, Bill True 101<sup>st</sup> AB, Dutch Schultz 82<sup>nd</sup> AB, Leonard "Bud" Lomell 2<sup>nd</sup> Rangers, unknown, Richard "Dick" Winters 101<sup>st</sup> AB, and legendary historian/author Stephen E. Ambrose. I was honored to share the afternoon with these brave men. I treasure these photos. Bottom Left, Todd Anton and Dutch on June 6, 2004 when I arranged for the Angels Baseball organization to have him throw out the first-pitch for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.



## I. THE PUNK

My name is Arthur B. "Dutch" Schultz. I was with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment and in "C" Company.

I got the nickname "Dutch" shortly after I entered the army. I went through basic training, Coast Artillery, and I ultimately was transferred to a Coast Artillery Battalion in Fort Bliss Texas. The Battery Commander had been a former New York Policeman. He realized that I had the same name as someone he apparently knew quite well and that happened to be Dutch Schultz, the gangster. His real name was Flegenheimer, but everybody knew him as Dutch Schultz, Arthur Flegenheimer. So, I picked up the name "Dutch" and it just followed me ever since. I was born in Phoenix Arizona. When I was roughly two years old my folks moved back east so my father could get employment in the automobile industry. So, I was raised most of my young life in Detroit Michigan, on the East Side of Detroit. I ultimately went to a parochial school where I spent twelve years with the Sisters of St. Joseph, who mistreated me and many of younger boys.



When I finished the eighth grade, a sister Burnett, one of the few sisters I really liked, asked if she could speak to my mother. I had my mother come in and sister Burnett told my mother that it would be preferential for me if I was taught by men and not women. She suggested that my mother consider sending me to Christian Brother School. I had no interest in leaving my friends of eight years. I had gone to school with some of kids eight years and

we were getting ready for high school. I had no interest leaving for a new school. In any event, I was told I was going. The problem I had with going to Christian Brother School was that it was pretty expensive. I think it was something like eighty-five dollars or one hundred dollars a semester or something like that, which was very, very, steep for a family that was surviving during the depression. In any event, I went and spent my freshman year. I spent time figuring ways that I could get out of attending this school. I was in trouble with the brothers all the time. A couple of times, they caught me smoking in the men's room, a brother did, and he hit me halfway across the men's room. I spent an awful lot of time in detention in a room what they call "a jug." I used to have to spend an hour after school in "the jug," because I had not done my work or I screwed up in some fashion. I was bound and determined that I was going back to my parochial school. I kept after my mother and I said, "mother you don't have to be spending this kind of money to send me to a private school." I said, "let me go back to my parochial school." They only charge just a dollar a month to go to school there. I was after her and I ultimately convinced her that I should go back. So, I went back to St. Phillip in my sophomore year. I was happy to be back with

my friends, my neighborhood friends and the kids that I had gone to school with for eight or nine years. But I was not a very good student. I was always in trouble. The only thing I wanted to do in high school was play baseball and basketball. Baseball was my primary sport and I loved baseball. I lived and dreamed of being a baseball player when I grew up. When I went out for the baseball team, as a sophomore, I made the first team. I made the varsity. I played first base, I was a left-



hander, and I did very well. I got better with each succeeding year. When I was a senior, my fellow players chose me as a captain of the baseball team. My dream was really to try and become a big-league ball player. I knew what I had to do. I knew I would end up in the minors and then from the minors I could gravitate towards a big-league team. I really wanted to play for the Detroit Tigers. I could remember my homeroom teacher when I was a senior asking the students what they wanted to do when they got out of high school. When she came to me, I told

her I wanted to be a professional ball player. She said to me, "any dummy can be a ballplayer." I don't know where it came from, but I said, "any dummy can teach English literature." I was kicked out of school. I ran home and I said to my mother, "You have to rescue me, you got to get me back into school, I am too close to graduation." She did. She went over and talked to the nun. Sister DeShontell and I did not get along. I also



remember in 1934, when I was in grammar school, I think I was thirteen years old, I was in the sixth or seventh grade, and the homeroom teacher allowed us to listen to the World Series between the Detroit Tigers and the St. Louis Cardinal's, which for us was a great, great event. I can remember the lineup of the Detroit Tigers back then. I remember that Mickey Cochrane was the catcher and the manager. He was backed up sometimes by a catcher named Ray Hayworth, Hank Greenberg was the first baseman, Charlie Gehringer was the second baseman, Billy Rogell was on shortstop, Bob Owen was the third baseman, "Goose" Goslin was in left field, George L.

White was in centerfield, and "Gee" Walker was in right field. The pitching staff included Schoolboy Rowe, Tommy Bridges, Elden Auker, "General" Crowder, and a couple of other pitchers whose names I don't remember. Anyway, I really took my baseball seriously. Of course, it was not to be because of World War II. What happened is, after I graduated from high school, I went out to New Mexico to visit my grandmother on my father's side. While I was out there, I joined the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corp, for six months. After we visited my grandmother, my parents took me to Santa Fe where I enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps where I spent the next six months. Now the war broke out on December 7<sup>th</sup> and I was still in the CCC. This was in Wheeler in the wide-open spaces near the Texas Panhandle. I would watch the trains carry in military equipment towards the West Coast and I knew the war was on. I didn't know what to think other than I couldn't wait to get out of the CCC to enlist. I got out of the CCC in Christmas of that year in 1941 when the war broke out. Anyway, to make a long story short, I tried to enlist in the services shortly after I came home from New Mexico.

My first choice to join was the Marine Corps. My mother said, "No, you are not going into the Marines and I won't sign for you." I said, "well let me go into the Navy?" She said, "no I won't sign for you to go into the Navy, they are sinking too many ships out there."

At that time there was a lot of Liberty Ships going back and forth and getting sunk by the Germans. So, I talked her into taking me down to the Coast Guard enlistment office. She took me down there and the last place I wanted to go was into the Army. When I was fifteen, I had gone through what they called CMTC, Citizens Military Training Corps.

I had spent a month training as a soldier and I did not like that. The Army back in those days was not regarded with a great deal of respect. The Marines were the top dogs, then the US Navy and then Coast Guard. The Coast Guard



accepted me. They said, "you are the provisional though" and we won't call you up for two or three weeks because we

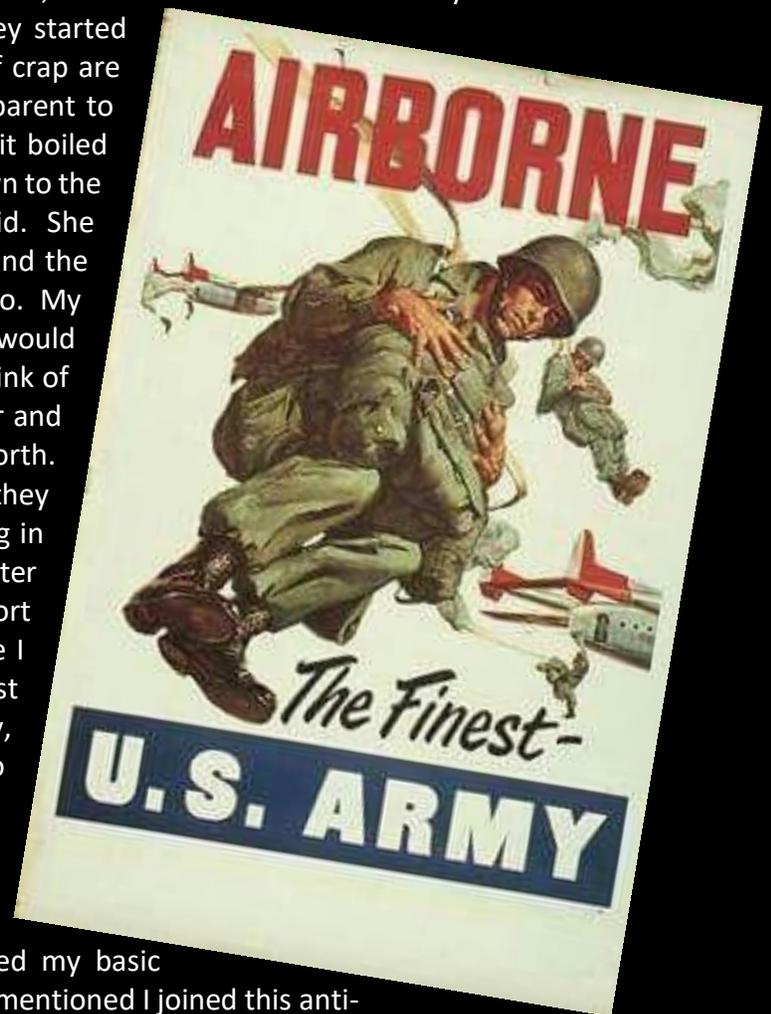


are giving priority to the Selective Service people, which were people who were going to be drafted into the Army." So, I went back in two or three weeks, each week on a Monday to see whether they were going to take me and they said "No." My problem at home was I told everybody in my neighborhood, my buddies, and family that I



am going away and fight the war. So, they took me out once on a Saturday night, got me a couple of beers, we went to a movie, raised a little hell, as good Catholic boys did in those days. After going down to the Coast Guard to check my status, I would come home and tell my friends "You know, they didn't take me this week and they started looking at me skeptically saying "What kind of crap are you giving us Schultz?" Finally, it become apparent to me that they didn't believe me. That is what it boiled down to. So, I said to my mother, "take me down to the Army and I will enlist in the Army," and she did. She took me down to the enlistment office. She and the Enlistment Sergeant discussed where I would go. My mother wanted me to go into an outfit where I would learn a trade. Back in those days you didn't think of going to college, you learned a trade. I let her and the Enlistment Sergeant discuss this back and forth. I had very little to say about it. They decided they were going to put me in Coast Artillery training in anti-aircraft. The next day I was sent to Fort Custer to be processed to go into the Army. From Fort Custer I went outside of Houston Texas where I did basic training in the anti-aircraft of Coast Artillery. No infantry training at all, but basically, I learned to march. I learned to fire a rifle and so forth. I also learned how to do KP (Kitchen Patrol). I made a mistake of telling a Corporal to "Go to Hell" and I spent seven days on KP washing pots and pans, peeling potatoes from before dawn to nighttime. Anyway, I finished my basic training. I was sent to Fort Bliss Texas, where I mentioned I joined this anti-aircraft battery, and this is where that company commander gave me the nickname "Dutch." I stayed with them almost a year and was bored out of my mind. Finally, I saw an announcement that the Army was seeking paratroopers and I volunteered.

I volunteered right then and I left to go to Fort Benning, Georgia for jump school.



## 2. THE BEST



I wanted to be the best soldier possible—the best! The paratroopers really fascinated me, they jumped out of airplanes, and they were supposed to be the very best of the best. They were supposed to be better than the Marines. Being the best appealed to me. My younger brother was now a Marine, and that excellence he had appealed to me. Besides that, we got \$50 more for jumping out of airplanes. Anyway, I went and I completed basic training. I completed jump training at Fort Benning. I qualified! I made my five combat-training jumps. From there, we were sent... this was in the fall now of 1943... when I finished jump school. They sent us to another Camp, called Camp Mackall, which was in North Carolina, where I had got in another five more training jumps. A very interesting thing happened to me there. I had a very good friend of mine who said to me on the last day we were to make our tenth jump, while we were in the plane, while he was sitting next to me and he said,

“Dutch I’m not going to jump.” Well, we were taught if you don’t jump you are dead meat, you are really dead meat. They warned us that in combat your officers could shoot you. In situations other than combat, they could make it so miserable for you that you would wish you were dead. They told us story after story about what could happen to us if we refused to jump. So, I was prepared and I did my best to try to get this friend of mine to change his mind saying, “C’mon, c’mon, lets jump, lets jump, c’mon...”, and I realized I could have given him a million dollars and he still wouldn’t have jumped. When it got time to stand up and hook up, we left him. After I jumped, we marched back to Camp Mackall, and we were told to put our Class A uniform on and

get ready for formation. We were called into formation and they brought this buddy of mine out. They stood him in front of the company and then the company commander, executive officer, and the platoon leaders came out. They started berating and dehumanizing this guy like you can’t believe. They cut off all of his buttons on his jump jacket, which was to signify a coward. They pulled off his jump wings. They slapped him around, with an open hand. They slapped

him in the face I don’t know how many times. I was frightened to death for him. I was frightened for me too. “What the Hell have I gotten myself in to?” I thought. I was sure I was never going to let this happen to me. I was never going to refuse to jump. Never! I was afraid of being called a coward and I saw this guy getting humiliated... Anyway, after it was all over, this company commander said to him, “If I give you another chance to jump would you jump?”

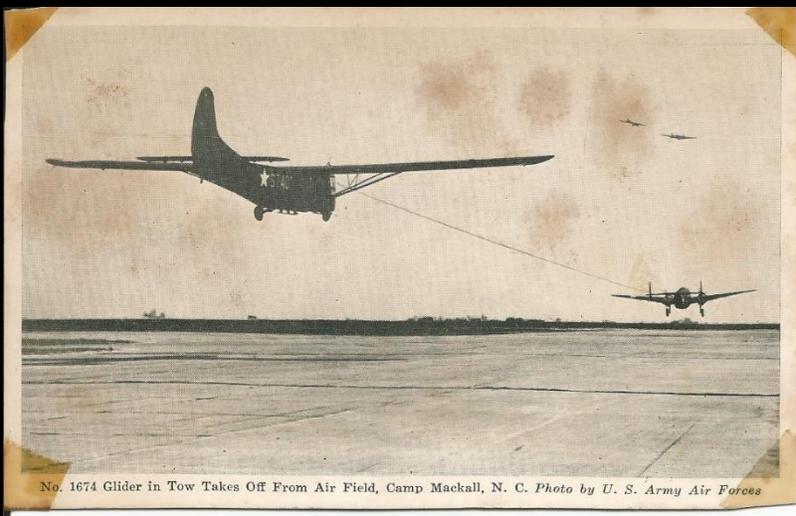


He said, "yes." So, he went up the next day by himself and he jumped. I couldn't believe it. He went up and jumped. He and I went over to Europe together on a troopship. We joined the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Ireland. The 82<sup>nd</sup> had just come back from combat in Italy. They had made combat jumps in both Sicily and Salerno in Italy. They moved from Italy over to Ireland and that is where we joined them as replacement company. Some of the 82<sup>nd</sup> stayed in Italy however. I was in the 505 PIR and there is a strong spirit in our outfit. Some historians wonder about who joined whom? Did 505 join the 82<sup>nd</sup> or did the 82<sup>nd</sup> join the 505? That is an interesting story.



When the 505 was organized it was a separate regiment, ultimately, they were absorbed by the 82<sup>nd</sup>, which had been a line outfit that converted over to being a paratrooper outfit, an airborne outfit. In fact, General Omar Bradley had been the commanding general of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division before it became activated as "airborne." The 82<sup>nd</sup> Division goes back to World War I. The double "AA" patch stands for "All American." The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne guys think they are funny saying the "AA" stands for

"Almost Airborne!" Like I said, we were absorbed into the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Now in the process of doing this, it is a very interesting story, Bob Hope came to visit the 505. Well he entertained the 505 PIR first and he was commenting on stage about how happy he was to be able to provide entertainment for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. Most of the people of 505 screamed, "this is not the 82<sup>nd</sup>, this is the 505." They had not yet accepted the fact that they were a member of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. General Ridgeway, who was the Commanding General of the 82<sup>nd</sup>, received a visit once from a junior officer from the 505, addressing the general he said to him, "the commanding officer of the 505 extends his best wishes to you," and he commented, "and happy to have you with us." He did not admit to being a member of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. Well, to make a long story short, there was some confusion there, but ultimately it was taken care of and 505 PIR became part of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne along with the 504 Parachute Infantry Division, and much later the 325<sup>th</sup> Glider Regiment.



No. 1674 Glider in Tow Takes Off From Air Field, Camp Mackall, N. C. Photo by U. S. Army Air Forces

### **3. BECOMING A PARATROOPER**

I think the first and foremost thing that happened to me, in becoming a paratrooper was the self-discipline. I started to realize a sense of duty. The duties and the obligation. The sense of duty that these people had, in terms of their commitment to serving each other, was at first really intimidating. Let me tell you those old 82<sup>nd</sup> veterans from Africa, and Italy, had something...a swagger about them, and a look in their eyes that they could kill you twice and not think about. I said "old" and what were they? Twenty-four/twenty-two years old. I didn't want to let those guys down. In Coast Artillery, I didn't have any sense of duty when I was in the for the first year or so. I had no responsibility. It was really playtime for me.



82<sup>nd</sup> veterans of Africa and Italy, better known as "The Devil in Baggy Pants," served as the training cadre of many companies that would fight in Normandy.

Really. It would have been the equivalent, I suppose, of a well-developed Boy Scout troop today. Let me give you an idea. We were supposed to be guarding, the Coast Guard anti-aircraft battery at one of the big US Navy yards in Fort Smith Virginia, right next to a Northrop factory, and I never ended up becoming a guard. Instead, I ended up being a lifeguard. I was a damn lifeguard at the local base pool watching the kids of our officers go swimming.

I was so bored out of my mind I started to box and train. I had boxed as a kid when in Detroit... and won the Amateur Golden Gloves and the Diamond Belt and so forth. All I did was box and do a little lifeguard duty and I ran a small PX, which is a term for a retail store, for our separate battalions. That is all I did as a soldier. Hell, I was no soldier. It was like going to work eight hours a day, but all of that changed when I got into jump school. Boy did it!

Our jump school was rough and I learned, number one to be obedient when the sergeant told me to give me twenty-five pushups, I gave him twenty-five. If he wanted another twenty-five, I gave him another twenty-five. I remember one sergeant saying to me in formation, he said, "Did you shave last night?" I said, "No I don't need to shave." I had a little peace fuzz and that's all I had. I probably shaved once or twice a week. That's all I shaved. He said, "You shave every day." He said, "give me fifty for not shaving." So, I got down and give him fifty damn push-ups. Sometimes he said, "give us another twenty-five while you are down there or give us fifty more." It was this, shaping, shaping, shaping.... and discipline meant to break me. I didn't have any conscious sense of what was happening to me, except that I was different. When I graduated from jump school that was probably the proudest moment in my life. When I got my jump wings, I was flying high let me tell you. The NCOs and training officers had bred this kind of luster into

being a paratrooper. I mean this was really the “cat’s meow” if I may use that old expression. It was a very, very, very important part of my life in becoming a paratrooper and I felt it. I was a man. I felt the esprit de corps, but I could not put those in so many words then. I had a legacy and tradition to live up to.



Dutch Schultz

That is where I was overwhelmed with this sense of duty that people in airborne had back in those days. As I joined the 505, I became more and more aware of it. I must tell you, when I joined the 505 it was the first-time, the first-time, I ever felt I was really in the Army. Why? Like I said, these guys had already had combat. They already had two combat jumps. They were already battle tested and they had a kind of maturity that I lacked, really lacked, in terms of why they were in the service and why they were fighting this war. You know I had some adolescent ideas that I picked up when I was going to Saturday afternoon matinees and seeing what a soldier was all about. I had seen on the screen how you become a hero without any price... you know that sort of thing. It is easy to become a hero when you are sitting in a theater on a Saturday

afternoon watching all these war movies. This was, brainwashing actually, that was starting to take over our young minds and I was not yet fully matured. That came much, much later once I saw some of my buddies give up their lives. I saw some of my friends make this ultimate sacrifice and you grow up. Those damn propaganda movies were a crime to show children. War is no game to teach kids to play.

What impressed me the most, the thing that amazed me most in training, were my platoon sergeants, my platoon leaders, and my officers. I can’t begin to express to you how much they meant to me, how much they meant to everybody in my outfit, my company, or whatever the case may be. Let me tell you a story about a man I love so much and you will see later as we talk, why we paratroopers loved General James Gavin. As the 505 was getting ready to ship out from the States, they all went in to town. Many of them got very drunk and disorderly. A trooper was arrested having open sex in the park and the police arrested him and many others. General Gavin then went to the judge and said “You are really going to hold these men in jail the night before we ship out? Many of these boys will never come home again because they are defending your life, your safety, your homes. Instead of arresting them, you should give them a medal!”

They were all released!

I was now on my way to Europe, as President Roosevelt said, to meet my “Rendezvous with destiny” ... on my way to...

Normandy.

## 4. THE LONGEST DAY

Before I went into Normandy, I have to tell you this; we got into this crap game. I thought I could shoot crap. I shot crap as a high school kid behind a pool hall once in a while, but that was for pennies and stuff. Anyway, I got this so-called famous crap game and I won \$2,500. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe I was winning all this money.<sup>1</sup>

Now, in the movie "The Longest Day," they had me losing it all for some reasons that weren't maybe true. The movie has me losing it all because I would have bad luck on my jump. The truth is, my friend, I lost all this money because there was a first-sergeant in the game that I didn't like and I was trying to bust him and it goes to show you how much of an amateur I was. Here I was putting my \$2,500 dollars up against his \$40 or \$50 bucks. That's all he had left and I wanted to break 'em. So, I invested \$2,500 and tried to break 'em. This was how experienced a gambler I was. To make a long story short I lost it all, but shortly after that game we were ordered to go to the airfield, the British airfield, where we were going to take off. We were supposed to take off.... Our D-Day was supposed to be on the June 4<sup>th</sup> and because of inclement weather it was postponed twenty-four hours and we now took off on June 5<sup>th</sup> about ten o'clock at night. Now, ten o'clock at night there was still in the daylight. England was on double standard time and so it was still daylight.

When taking off I had probably had, all of us had, about one hundred pounds of equipment hanging and packed all over me. I couldn't believe what I was carrying: an anti-tank mine, a hundred pounds of ammunition, Gammon hand grenades, all those sorts of things. We had to be helped to get into the airplane. While we were going over, I was saying one rosary after another. This was the beginning of the



<sup>1</sup> According to the CPI Inflation Calculator, \$2,500 in 1940s is worth \$33,732.14 at the time of this interview with Dutch in 2004 <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1940?endYear=2004&amount=2500>

dawn for me at least in terms of realizing what was going to happen or could happen to me—I could be killed. I made sure I was covering all my tracks by saying all these rosaries. I remember one of the guys next to me kept asking to borrow the rosary and I said, “No you can’t because I am using it.” As we crossed into Normandy our C-47 started shaking, shuddering, rattling, and rolling. I had no idea what was going on. What it was, is we were coming under German anti-aircraft attack – ack-ack. I didn’t realize this then. What the Hell did I know? I was a rookie. The old timers did. They knew what was going on.



I happened to look out a window and I saw, what I thought, fire coming out of one of the engines, a C-47 engine. I said to the guy next to me, “look at that fire is that something to worry about?” He said, “fire, my ass, Hell, that’s *ack-ack*.” The red light went on to stand up and hook up and all the time, I kept thinking the Germans

are firing at me. They are firing at directly me! They are firing at me! We were hooking up and we were checking the equipment of the guy in front of us when all of a sudden, we went ass over teakettle and we hit the deck. That plane was falling like a roller coaster. What had happened was we had been hit by *ack-ack*. What happened is the pilot veered off course to avoid other planes on top of us, and the C-47 went sort of on its side. We couldn’t get back on our feet fast enough to get out of damn plane and we did. What I didn’t know at the time was that we were jumping at a much lower altitude than we normally would have jumped at and at a speed entirely too fast. We generally jumped between 800 to 900 feet. That gave us enough time for our chute to open. I went out the door and saw *ack-ack* firing all over. You could read the newspaper coming down if I had the need or purpose too. I was jumping in to a damn 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks show of death. When my chute opened, I said, “1,000, 2,000, 3,000,” and the chute opened. I oscillated once and went up in the air and the next thing I knew I came down flat on my back. Stuck in a tree really. What I learned later was we jumped at probably six or seven hundred feet, which is really way too low. A few more feet lower and I wouldn’t have made it. I jumped and got tangled up in an apple tree yanking my back. What I didn’t know at the time was I separated four discs in my



The apple orchard where Dutch Schultz landed. DDMT will take you there.

back. What I didn’t know at the time was I separated four discs in my

back which would cost me a contract with the Phillies Baseball Club in the future. I cut myself out of my parachute and fell to the ground. I threw away the Gammon grenade. I threw away my gas mask. I threw away anything I didn't need and I started looking for somebody. There was nobody to be found.

I was totally alone. It was D-Day and I was totally alone. I was scared as a frightened rabbit. After that, I didn't realize it at the time, but a German fired at me. He fired his MG-42. I later recognized what that sound was. I took my M-1 rifle, turned, and pointed into the direction where I thought the fire was coming from and I pulled the trigger.

"Click."

Nothing.

I realized that I failed to load ammunition in my M-1 rifle, that was how advanced of an infantryman I was at that point and time. I scrambled to get to a hedgerow, to cover, so I could put some ammunition in my M-1 rifle. I kept thinking "I am totally unprepared for this." I walked around and around and around the countryside until daybreak...well we jumped off about 0100 hours. I didn't see anybody, nobody for the next five or six hours.

I was totally alone.

I heard some gunfire. I heard the battleship's huge guns open up.

I heard the shells going overhead. The thing that I remember, I was never at that point and time so frightened of anything in my life. I was frightened to death and I couldn't wait to get out of there fast enough. I felt like that when I was walking around Normandy all by myself. I would stop and rest in one of the hedgerows and get up and start walking again. I don't know where I walked. I don't know how I even survived. One moment would be like a walk in the park on a Sunday afternoon, quiet and very peaceful, then all of a sudden, all Hell would break loose. There would be artillery fire, and small arms fire and so forth, but I was nowhere near it. It wasn't until 0745 in the morning or 0800, I'm not sure, when Lieutenant Jack Tallerday found me. Lieutenant Tallerday was the Executive Officer. He had about seven or eight different paratroopers from all different regiments even some from the 101<sup>st</sup>.

I yelled "Flash" and raised my rifle to fire. Then came the counter sign "Thunder!"

I was never so happy to see somebody in my life. He came around a corner and I met him at the corner of a hedgerow.

He was going to take us to our objective, which was the La Fiere Bridge there in Normandy. As we started back along the road and we got closer and closer to the bridge, Tallerday said, "You guys stay here." I remember, looking around where we were standing and I saw this GI laying, with an 82 patch on his shoulder, in a perfect prone firing position. I approached him from the rear, and I started talking to him. There was no answer. I got closer, closer and closer, I knelt down and looked into his face, and he had a bullet hole right through his forehead above his right

eyebrow. What was so strang about it, I didn't see any blood, but what was so unusual about him was on top of his hand, on the back of his hand there was some white powdery stuff. I don't know what that was. I assume it came from the skull wound he had explaining that white powdery stuff there. That was the first dead person I ever saw. That was one of my first death up close experiences. I don't know why I kept staring.

Was I looking at my future?

Have you ever seen a dead man?

When we had a break, I ran back to where there was some comfort and security with the rest of the troops. Now all these guys that Tallerday found were all newcomers like myself and they were all scared. They were all new to combat too. Anyway, at some point we got closer to closer to our objective, that damn bridge, and Tallerday said, "You guys stay here, I am going down to reconnoiter and he did. We lit up some cigarettes and we were smoking on the side of the road. He said, "I'll be back for you and then we will go on up."

Time passed by and he never came back.

I guess we stayed in position there for 45 minutes, I don't know, and then we decided that we were going to move up in the same direction he was going. We were walking along this road, and there was artillery barrages around us. Nothing directly upon us, and we saw this body lying along the road with an attending medic. As I got closer, I realized it was Tallerday.

I thought he was dead and everybody did.

I had terrible, terrible, guilt because I never bothered to go check and see if he was dead.

I walked right on by him. I never got over that.

As we got closer and closer to the La Fiere Bridge, which was one of our main objectives to take, we were told that this bridge had to be held to keep the krauts from going down to where the infantry troops were coming in on Utah Beach. Some of the Germans had zeroed in on us with their mortars. There was about seven or eight of us and we scattered. We scattered in four different directions as they were dropping the mortars in on us and, again, I was lost. I moved around and around and couldn't find anybody. Low and behold, it must have been somewhere in the afternoon hours, I saw General James Gavin.



General James Gavin

Gavin was organizing some of these guys, like myself, up and getting us together. What he did was set us up in a defensive line along the railroad tracks and there we were to spend the night. I didn't sleep at all that night. The next day, I finally found members of some of my C/Company. I found them in an apple orchard, which was surrounded by hedgerows, and I hooked up with them. I stayed there for a couple of days. One of the very interesting things... we were on one side of the La Fiere Bridge and the krauts were on the other side, there were a lot of firing back and forth across the bridge. We had bazookas to try to stop these tanks and we had a couple 47-mm guns. We spent a couple of days there. Finally, we managed to hold them back and they never, never, never got over the bridge. Four of our bazooka men, I think they were from A/Company, were all awarded the DFC for heroically stopping some of these tanks. To make a long story short, I was having more and more trouble with my back. I could barely walk.



The La Fiere Bridge today as seen on your DDMT Tour

We got organized. I finally got together with C/Company. We had only two officers left. One was Lieutenant Johnson and the other one was a platoon leader. That is what was left in that company. The rest were wounded or dead.

Faces you've seen for months and they are just gone. I see those faces every day. I shed a tear every day. I really do. It is no BS man. I cry every day. Captain Steph, Anthony Stefanich (right) who we loved, had already been hit and Johnny Johnson saved his life. I heard about this. I did not see how. I was not with them. We lost our battalion commander. We lost our assistant battalion commander and executive officer. We really took a beating in those first couple of days at the bridge there. We lost a lot of good boys.



Captain Stefanich



# D-DAY MEMORY TOUR SNAPSHOTS



*On your journey you will develop lifelong friends and a shared experience. I did and love and admire those I was able to share so much with. You will return home trying to find the right words to explain it all.*



## **5. THE PAIN OF IT ALL...**



We finally stifled the German's assault in terms of getting to the La Fiere Bridge. Then we finally got the company organized, what was left of it, somewhat, and we rested up for twenty-four hours. None of us had been sleeping at all. We stayed in attack mode. We were pretty wired. Now that was where I started having a lot of physical trouble. My back was just killing me shooting waves of electricity all up and down my back and legs. Some moments I was numb, but you just keep going, but I just couldn't keep up with the guys but I tried.

I remember one of the attacks we were on. We ran by wounded and dead Germans and I saw this German soldier. He was lying in his back and he was crying, screaming really. His large intestine was poking out of his stomach wound. I ran by him and for some reason I stopped after fifteen or twenty feet and I turned around. My buddy Ray Gonzalez, a guy I was on the boxing team with, was pointing an M-1 at this fatally wounded soldier and the kraut said, "pistol, pistol, pistol" pointing at his head pleading to be killed. Anyway, I watched Ray pull the trigger of his BAR aimed right between these guys eyes blowing his brains all over the place. The thing that amazed me was I wanted to be like Ray. I wanted to be ruthless. At jump school, they taught us to be ruthless with sayings like "The only good German is a dead German. They are the enemy kill them" and they taught us all kinds methods to do that. We used to have kill lectures. They had psychiatrists/psychologists coming from universities to give us these lectures on how to kill. Can you believe that? It was an amazing thing. Anyway, I wanted to be like Ray. I watched Ray out of horror in a sense, but also, I was impressed with what he did. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to be ruthless and of course I never turned out that way.

I thank God for that.

I saw Ray, many, many, years later, and I said, "Ray, I mentioned you in a story about you killing that German to Stephen Ambrose, but I never used your name." Ray started crying, really started crying, really, really, really, broke down man, and I was crying too. I guess he was going through recollecting some of things he did during World War II. Well, we all were. We still do.

Ray was one hell of a soldier. There was no question about it. Then on the other hand, Ray saved two men in Holland. He saved the lives of two men. You know some part of me thinks he killed that German out of a sense of humanity not hatred.

You never really know what motivates a guy, but I know by the time he died at 80 years old, Ray was one of the softest, and kindest human beings I have ever known. No question about that. His family loved him. Everybody loved this guy and he was a big old softy. Back there in the years of the war, he was tough. He was one tough cookie. I know, because I used to spar with him in boxing. I realized that Ray was trying to knock me out, cold cocks me when we were boxing. He would try like Hell and of course I was a converted southpaw. I could keep him away with a left jab. You know, "Bang, bang, bang," you and move out and "Bang, bang, bang." He would pursue me with a vengeance, he had a heck of a right hand. He never caught me, but the point I am getting at is Ray to me is a reflection of all of GIs in WWII and now. We were hard as nails and grew in to old softies later. I share this story with you and want you to share it with all you know. I want you to NEVER, NEVER judge us soldiers. Got that? You just can't understand the randomness of combat at all and the images and actions you have to live with. So, to those of you who judge us, you can just... "Go to Hell."

I wasn't with Captain Stefanich when he was wounded. The first day in Normandy he had about 35 of C/Company people with him, including Johnny Johnson, and they were going up to the La Fiere Bridge which was our main objective. Anyway, as he was going up this road he was hit. He was carrying a smoke grenade and the smoke grenade caught fire. Besides the wound of course, this smoke grenade was starting to burn his clothing and his wound. Johnny was across the road when he saw this, Lieutenant Johnny Johnson ran across the road and under enemy fire, jumped on Steph and put the fire out. Then he took one of his own smoke grenades and threw it down the road to the bridge and used that as a cover to pick up and carry Steph on his back to get him medical attention all under German fire.

That's love man. Real love.

I know this isn't a Normandy story, but it's something you have tell for me. So, I wrap up this story of the "Longest Day," or whatever you want to call it, with this story of love. In Holland, Captain Steph went to save a pilot who had crash-landed. His glider and had come under small arms fire. Steph went out to save him. On the way out, he was hit fatally. I heard the medic said, "I can't save him." "I can't save him." "I can't save him." He was going around saying, "I can't save him." "I can't save him." Johnny came running up and Johnny talked to Steph a moment or two before he died and Steph said, "Johnny, be sure the boys do a good job, we have come a long way, be sure they do a good job," and Steph died. Johnny picked him up again and carried him back to a barn, cradling Steph in his arms, crying all the way. Crying tears, I mean really big tears as German small arms fire sprayed us all. Steph and Johnny were so close. They were so tight. Here Johnny saved him in Normandy and Johnny couldn't save him in Holland. They were the closest of friends. They never went out on the town. They both stayed in camp all the time. They never left. If I can use the word, and I use it as affectionately, they were our "puritans" in a true sense of the word.

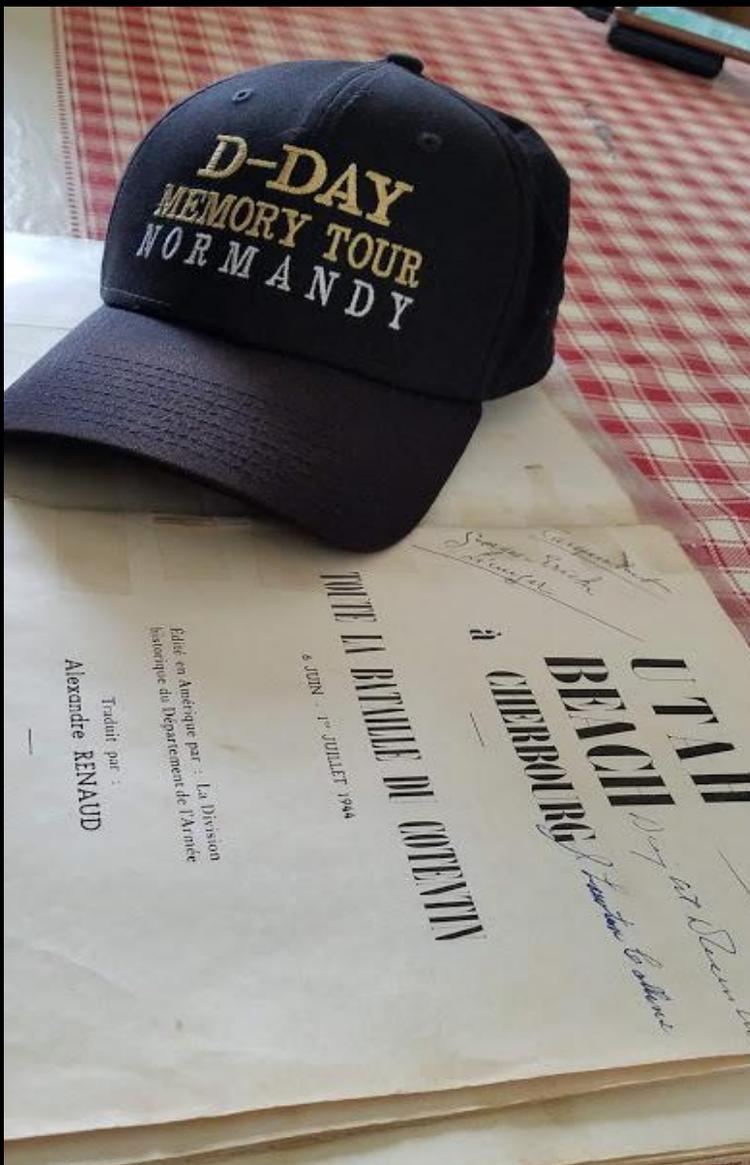
After a few days resting in the fields outside La Fiere, I couldn't really walk anymore. I couldn't run. In combat I was slowing everybody down and I couldn't keep up. I was told to go back to Battalion Medical. I went back and they told me during the jump I tore a ligament and separated some vertebrae my back.

I was evacuated and sent back to the hospital in England and spent five or seven weeks in recovery. They were talking about sending me back home. I couldn't deal with that. I was in a lot of pain, but I just couldn't go home knowing my guys were still out there. No way.

"Send me back to my company," I kept saying.

I got back with my company in England, after they spent 33 days in combat in Normandy, to reorganize and regroup.

I got back in the 505 just in time for Holland.



Your D-Day Memory Tour will take you into homes of locals. Note the autograph of Generals Eisenhower and Collins in this book.

## 5. HOLLAND



When we jumped into Holland in September of 1944, we were told that this would end the war and force a narrow fatal thrust into the heart of the German industrial Ruhr Valley and destroy German industrial capacity and kill the Reich. All of this was designed by British General Bernard Montgomery (*at left*) aka "Monty." We all hated this guy. What a pompous SOB. He got a lot of us troopers killed in the 82nd. When we jumped it was a perfectly clear day--gorgeous. We jumped at daylight and landed in fields and it was or seemed like a "walk in the Park." Then all Hell broke loose. In his book "On to Berlin" which I gave my personal copy to you from General Gavin, you can read that General Gavin (*pictured left*) says



our mission was to seize the long bridge over the Maas River at the city of Nijmegen. That is what we did and we held it. We never retreated nor gave up our position. While other divisions retreated, we held. General Gavin jumped in with the 505. He was never one to lead from behind. That's what a leader did. I guess I should tell you the plan was to jump and control a series of bridges so the American and British armor could move up this highway into western Germany and begin our thrust into Germany. Problem was once a plan is in operation it never goes to plan. There was no other option on this damn road. You couldn't turn around. It was

a Goddamn traffic jam and the Poles and British up north couldn't hold on. So, it was failure. I personally blame military politics for this FUBAR campaign. "Monty's" feelings were hurt as he became increasingly irrelevant in the Supreme Command and he went whining to Churchill and then that got "Ike" (General Eisenhower) involved and our advances in southern Germany was slowed down pissing off General Patton all in the name of British glory.



The Nijmegen Bridge over the Waal River in 1944

Again, while I was telling my story to “Connie” Ryan for the his “Longest Day” book, he also asked me about Operation Market Garden which is the title for our operation in Holland. Many of these interviews with me and hundreds of others became the foundation of his other famous book titled “A Bridge to Far.” Later after my rehab from Normandy, I joined the first platoon C/505. The first platoon was given an assignment to help B/Company hold some high ground the first day we were in Holland. B/Company was having some trouble with the German counter attack. We were very close to the German border, maybe less than a mile, where we jumped in Holland. So, they were fighting harder to defend their homeland and they were getting desperate. There was a forest between Holland and Germany called the Reichswald. I think that is what is was called. It separated Holland and Germany. We were afraid that German Panzers were going to start moving from Germany into where we were at coming through there. We were going to provide support for that flank of the 82nd. So, we took the high ground on the southern sector of the town.

Anyway, my buddy Ray Gonzalez’s platoon went to take this high ground up the street protecting our area into town. In the process of doing it, one of the guys, one of the newcomers had gotten into a fire fight. One of the soldiers, a guy by the name of Creswick was shot in the stomach and the platoon did not have a medic with them at that time. Of course, when a guy had an open stomach wound, it was just a question of time before they would die. Rather than leaving Creswick laying in the dirt and mud to die, they put him in a vacant store in town just down a bit from the high ground while the rest of the platoon went up the hill to repulse the German counterattack. Ray had the lowest point on the hill to defend and watch. So he was closest to

Creswick's location. During the night, he went in to check on Creswick and he did it three times. The second time he went down to check on him, Creswick told him he had to go to the bathroom to have a bowel movement. Ray took off his combat gear set it down, carried Creswick over to a toilet, undressed him, and put him on the toilet so he could have his bowel movement and then he cleaned him all up too. My thought watching this was, "The guy is dying, why bother even making sure that he has a BM? You know it doesn't matter when you are dying." Ray was accommodating him all the way. That was love. Pure love. I cry thinking about it. Combat is so damn emotionally confusing. You will never understand it. I hope you will never understand it.

Ray picked Creswick up off the toilet, redressed him, and put him back softly on his bedding and went back to his position. He took some risk in doing this because this shop was located was along this highway. It was an exposed position. Funny I remember that the shop we were in had a huge plate-glass window that was not broken. When the sun hit it, it was like a mirror. I was given a direct order to break the window and do it quietly. Any German patrol could have come up and taken out Ray and all of us. The third time he came down the hill, Creswick was dead. You know, I thought it was quite marvelous that he would take the time to show this guy some tenderness. That's Christian mercy in action. Normally you don't expect this kind of thing in a combat situation. Ray's platoon was relieved days later. They came under heavy machine gun fire and small arms fire. Ray got out of their forward position along with some others in his company. Some were killed and some were



wounded coming off that hill. When Ray found out the Creswick's body was still back there in that storefront, he took off all his equipment, except for his rifle, and went back into this area where Creswick was lying and he carried him out. In the process of carrying Creswick's body out of the storer, there was also a Mexican kid, from New Mexico according to Ray who knew Ray, and he had been hit in the leg and knee in there. He said to Ray, "please come after me, please come back and get me, please come back and get me, don't leave me here." Ray said, "I'll be back." He set Creswick's body down and he picked this kid up and he must have carried this him at least a half of mile when this medical jeep came up. He got this guy in the back of the jeep for first aid. Eventually he got Creswick out too. Ray got the Silver Star for this.

Here is a guy, Ray, who shot a German soldier between the eyes and thought nothing about it on D-Day, on the other hand he went and saved a couple of his buddies. In addition to that, one buddy he was very tender with while he was dying (Creswick). So how do you weigh that? How do you balance that out? How do you make any sense of this?

Did I mention the business about the guy who refused to jump in jump school? You remember that guy the instructors beat up and embarrassed at jump school? This guy ultimately got a Silver Star, you know in the Normandy campaign and again in Holland. How do you balance that out against the fact that he was “a coward” at one time? I can’t sort that out, except to say we are men of many seasons.

We lost quite a few people in Holland and we ultimately spent seventy some days in combat, on the line, before we were relieved. All for what? Then we were sent back to an old French Army facility where we would reorganize again and get replacements. Winter was coming and we thought we were going to get a break. We were there less than a month when we got word about the Bulge. Merry Christmas!



General James Gavin “gears up” for a combat jump.

## **6. THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE**



We headed up to the Bulge in trucks, I mean massive trucks. We probably contained a whole platoon in one truck and there was no covering. It was raining and cold as hell, damp, damp and freezing. We did not have proper clothing at all, none of us. I went up there with just my jump boots and mostly summer clothing. When I say summer clothing, I am talking about the light jump jackets and those thin wool shirts and thin socks. All those summer clothes do is hold moisture in them and make you feel heavy and even more cold. Ultimately, we got some winter supplies when we were fighting in the Bulge nearly three weeks in to the battle. I was carrying only a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) and I had two clips of ammunition. That was all I had. We got called about 0300 in the morning to be ready to go by seven or eight or whatever.

We were in France, maybe fifty miles short of Rheims. Initially, our commander was

Gavin. Gavin ordered us out and sent us to where he believed the German offensive would exploit the thin American lines. We were in one hell of a hurry and were the first Airborne troops in position at the Bulge. Gavin and the acting commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> General Anthony McAuliffe worked together to place U.S. reinforcements. Initially, we, the U.S. 82<sup>nd</sup>, were going to go to Bastogne, but because we got prepared quicker, we were ready to go further north. So, Gavin and McAuliffe sent us on up beyond Bastogne.

So, the truth is the 82<sup>nd</sup> was quicker than the 101<sup>st</sup> into the Bulge! That's right! That's right! All the way! For some reason historians like my old friend Stephen Ambrose ignore that. That 101st HBO series "Band of Brothers" makes it seem that the 101<sup>st</sup> won the entire Battle of the Bulge all by themselves. I'm not discounting what they did by any means. I just want the correct record to give the 82<sup>nd</sup> the credit they deserve. I've got a reason why there is so much the love for the 101<sup>st</sup>, but that is for later. Then finally we got off these trucks, we were soaking wet to begin with, and walked and walked, and walked. We walked all night, all night, all day too it seemed.



General Gavin, right, and Matthew Ridgeway, left, at the Battle of the Bulge 1944.

We got to our position, north of Bastogne, in a place called St. Vith at dusk. Darkness fell quickly in the wintertime. It was really dark and foggy and quiet. We finally got to the river, got into position, and it was getting cold. I mean cold, (records show  $-4^{\circ}$  to  $-9^{\circ}$  F). It was starting to snow. This rain that we had been sitting in in the back of those trucks was becoming snow. We were ordered to dig in and create defensive positions. I'm telling you that we couldn't dig foxholes. The ground was solid brick.

We slept in barns. We slept in basements of houses or where ever we could. Then I came down with bronchitis and a few other diseases. I was told to go in sick hall and they said, "you are going to the hospital." I went to a hospital in Belgium, I can't recall it, and I stayed there for about three weeks and they were buzz bombing



this town where I was staying in the hospital. That worried me more than being on the front line, because those buzz bombs, psychologically, would come over and "buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz," and when then they stopped. You knew they were coming down. That was nerve racking to tell you the truth. After I was there for three weeks, I knew my outfit was getting hit hard, really hard and I asked to go back. I asked to go back on the line. They released me and I went

back. When I got back, they probably had 35 men left in the company, 35, or 40 men, that's all. In a parachute company, there is about 160 or 165 men. Shortly after getting back, we were relieved and we were taken to a small Belgium community where inhabitants invited us to stay in their homes.

As soon as I got in this home the mother of two children, middle-aged women, saw that I was pretty sick. I got sick again and again in this damn war. She put me in bed and it was the first

time I ever slept under a comforter since I got in the Army. Back in my day when I was growing up, I slept with blankets, but this was a soft comforter and that was classy man. High living for me anyway. She fed me the equivalent of Belgium "Chicken Soup," whatever that was. I don't remember potato soup probably. She got me back on feet again. On my birthday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of January we left.

She had a boy who was about sixteen years old and he gave me a photo to remember him by. We sort of talked broken English, broken French, whatever, you know to communicate as best as we could. Yes, he gave me a photo of him on a bicycle and I took that photo home. Not sure why I kept it, but I did and still have it today. Many years later I went back to visit that town and I found this photo and took it with me to Europe. I went from store to store in town. I went to a couple of stores, I finally went to a drug store, the equivalent of a drug store, and said, "do you recognize this person?"

They did.

They knew him!

They got him on the phone and we arranged to have a meeting that night at the hotel where I was staying. Well, he didn't show up for whatever reason. The next day I was coming down to get on the bus and I saw him. I recognized him right away. Dressed in this suit, gray hair and so forth, and we hugged and greeted one another and then I had to get on the bus. I got off the bus a couple of times, he started crying, and we hugged some more. We did that about three or four times and then we took off on the bus. Unbeknownst to me, he got in his car and he was meeting us at the next roundabout, they have these rounds over there, and he would be waving at us as we were going by. War is so strange; you learn how to love strangers. You understand what I am saying? I never saw this guy for 35 years, but it was a very, very emotional moment and our reuniting was a very tender scene. What was more amazing was he was going ahead of our bus and meeting us at these rounds and waving at us three different times. The guys on the bus were saying "Dutch you better watch out, he'll be meeting you when you get back to L.A. when you get off the airplane."

Anyway, going back to the story, this is where we left the Bulge to go up what became known as the "Hurtgen Forest until February 1945.

## **7. HURTGEN FORREST AND INTO GERMANY**

The Hurtgen Forrest. That was something else. I remember going up a hill, up a path, a muddy path, and looking down at the snow that was starting to melt and you start to see bodies. You could see arms. You could see legs. You could see upper torsos. You could see all kinds of distortions, you know, the human body seemingly creepy from the mud and snow. You'd see all kinds of equipment, tanks, and trucks and so forth and so on. That was the division from Pennsylvania, the 28<sup>th</sup> I think. They had been wiped out about three months earlier, but what amazed us is nobody made any effort to reclaim our dead or the wounded, because the weather



was so horrible. But we could never, never.... And never forget these images. It was a haunting nightmare. When I was up on this trail, I was sick too. It just seemed we were always walking, and it was always wet so, I got very sick again.

We kept going forward until I fell down, collapsed actually, in the mud and I didn't care

whether I lived or died. I wasn't going to do anything but stay there, just lay there, and I remember staring at the sky totally expecting to see heaven. I remember hearing the sounds of combat and seeing men and running by in some sort of slow-motion movie. I was fading in and out of consciousness. I was that sick. Thankfully, some replacement lieutenant came over to me, and he picked me up. He took my Tommy gun, my backpack, and carried me and my gear several miles.

I saw such sacrificial love all the time and it has a purity about it. I also have some pangs of guilt too about it. I don't know why.

I bunked with this lieutenant in a foxhole there for a day. We traded small arms fire with Germans, but what I remember is it seemed we were more at war with the weather and mud than the Germans. Very soon after that, we finally met some medics, and I went back into the hospital. I was sent to Paris and spent time in Paris in a hospital. I had pneumonia so bad as a result of the severe cold. My lungs were frostbitten from breathing that freezing air in the Bulge.



Then when I got out of that hospital, I went to join my outfit on the Rhine River right outside of Cologne. We were on one side of the river and the Germans were on the other side. My company was living in houses right on the river's edge, and I happened to be let out of a two and half ton truck, maybe a quarter of a mile from this house with other replacements. I am

walking down towards where C/Company was located, and I saw this 82<sup>nd</sup> guy peering around a house at us in a crouching position as we just walked on down as if in a walk in the park towards him. I wondered "What the Hell? What is this guy doing?" I reported to the company commander and I said, "What is that guy doing peering around the corner of a house at us?" He said, "Well somebody got shot there yesterday by a sniper." I was beyond upset. He didn't even bother to tell us to take cover or have some caution. I couldn't believe it. That is somebody I am going to stay away from. I am not even going to get near him in combat.

All of a sudden, the British needed us up in Northern Germany. They needed us because they were having trouble...they were afraid that the Russians were going to sweep into Denmark. We were not too far away from Hamburg area.

The reason the 82<sup>nd</sup> was ordered up there was we were being told by British intelligence that the Germans had a full army in this area. We rode the train there in cars called 40&8's, which comes from it size that could accommodate forty men, and eight horses. We rode this train for a couple of days to get up to where we were going to Northern Germany. By the time we got to the town the British had forced out all the people (German nationals) who lived in this small village, so we



took over the houses. We were going to make a river crossing the next night so we made the best of our situation prior to going in. Paratroopers being very enterprising people, very good at investigating their surroundings, found a cache of liquor, I mean good liquor. Now, booze is one thing I never did in combat. I never drank, because I knew I would do something stupid if I were halfway under influence. So, I didn't drink. I did a lot of drinking before and after, but never in combat. Some of our guys found this liquor and they found all the town's people garb they wore



Members of the 70<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division "Trailblazers" celebrate in the German city of Saarbrücken, Germany 1945. This was the author's father's division in WWII.

in parades, uniforms, and they put these band uniforms on, and went crazy playing some of the musical instruments. None of these guys could play a tune, but they are marching going up and down the street, drinking, playing, and blowing trumpets, and... it would drive you crazy "boom ba boom, ba boom" and the horns.



Talk about noise, they were walking up and down the street drunker than skunks. Now, as I said, I did not drink that day. I touched nothing. Some of my buddies did and they really guzzled the booze big time. That evening, my platoon leader told me I was going to be a bodyguard for the battalion commander and I said, "What are you talking about? A bodyguard?" I had never heard of a battalion CO having a bodyguard. What I didn't know was he was drunk. He was drunker than a skunk and he was a replacement guy. I was his babysitter. This was not the outfit I joined back in the early days of the 505.

Once I saw him, I knew I had to get away from him. I reported to him, close to midnight at the battalion headquarters and I didn't know how I was going to do it, but I wasn't going to spend much time with him. Now we had to cross this damn river. Anyway, the next day we got in these British.... they were built out of a wax cardboard composite, wooden

slots, and canvas. These damn little British boats provided no cover as the Germans were firing at us as we rowed across. The Krauts were using a lot of artillery. I wasn't affected at all by it. I was used to it; some of the other people, replacements, in the regiment were, but not me.

I met the CO I was supposed to protect and I got in this dingy with him and about ten other guys and now the CO was standing up in dingy like he was George Washington crossing the Delaware. I couldn't believe it. You know, we got out into the middle of the river, pitch black, and he was

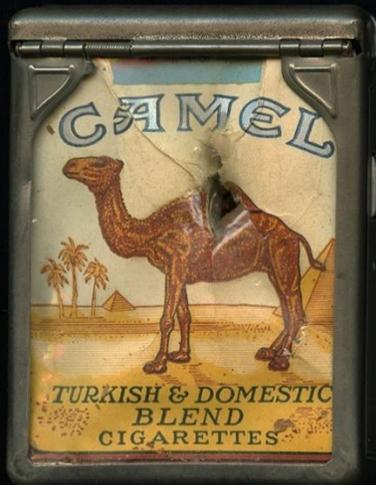


screaming at the top of his lungs to the other boats, "Get the f--- out of the way," and this kind of language you couldn't believe. He'd say, "You son of a bitch," and all kinds of crap to all of us in the boat, and I am wondering is this really my 505? He was a fool and making us a target.

His actions were making me nervous. I was thinking

"What the hell am I going to do?" There was a lieutenant riding next to me, who I knew from the Bulge, as he was rowing and he said "You come with me when we land," and I said, "You better believe I'll come with you." He was a 38er. A 38er was a Jew who immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1938, so we called them 38ers, and he was shocked at this replacement CO in my boat. My new found friend who was looking out for me was one of the intelligence officers. We hit the riverbank and he said, "You follow me," and I jumped out and we along with his company started running, running, and running and we got about a quarter of a mile and we saw some houses. One of the houses had some lights on. He started speaking very fluent German and two women came out, we saw the shadow of these two women, and he started talking to them. Then I saw some shadows moving in the background of that house and I went around to the rear. Now over there in Europe, their houses, had barns which was like our garages in America. The barn was attached to the house. So, I went around to the back and I entered the door to this barn and there were a bunch of Germans in there and I said, "Put your hands up," and so forth and they all did. A couple of them spoke English. It turns out they were all policemen from Hamburg. They had been drafted, conscripted very late into the German Army. The '38er brought a couple of German boy soldiers with him that came out from the front of the house and back to me. I don't remember how many there were. There were at least ten or twelve prisoners. We disarmed them and got their weapons out of the way and sat them down on the ground of the barn. A military war correspondent was somehow with us who knew this '38er, and so they were going up to interview the two women and get a feel for the German people for a broadcast back to the States. So, they left me with the POWs. I was sitting on a stairwell watching these guys with my Tommy Gun.

The POWs were sitting on the floor and I was sort of looking down on them from the stairwell going into the main house. I pulled out my cigarettes and I start smoking. I think I was smoking Lucky Strikes. I felt this pressure focused on me and what it was I saw all of these guy's eyes



piercing, looking at me intently as I smoked. I knew what they wanted, they wanted cigarettes. So, I threw them two packs of Camel cigarettes. I hated Camels. One of the POWs, their commander, was a senior sergeant. He spoke fluent English so I could correspond with him and I threw him the cigarettes. It was so smokey in there!! Everybody was smoking these damn cigarettes. By this time, some more American Paratroopers are coming up not knowing the house was cleared. I hollered out, "Don't shoot in here, there are Americans in here, don't shoot in here, don't shoot in here." One of the paratroopers came thrusting into the barn, weapons at the ready and he said, "Where did these damn Krauts get the f---ing cigarettes?" I said, "I don't know." I lied you know. I wasn't supposed to do this.

I was a fellow paratrooper you didn't do kind things like this. You just didn't show them mercy. You were supposed to treat them rottenly. So, I lied and I told him, "I don't know."

Anyway, after the Airborne troopers left, the German sergeant who was in charge and watched my interaction with my fellow troopers said, "Do you want a Luger?" I said, "Yes I do," and he took me to where they had buried a Luger and gave me Luger. So, I now had my 45, and a Luger. I was well armed, that plus my Tommy gun. The Lugers were worth one hundred twenty-five dollars in souvenir trade amongst us. It was a kind of currency you know?

Anyway, I was wondering, why the '38er never came back nor did the war correspondent? I wondered "What the Hell am I going to do with these prisoners. What the Hell am I supposed to do with them?" I saw some more troops coming up and I saw a captain. I went out and I saw a captain and I said, "Captain would you let me have one of your men to help me take these prisoners back to the water's edge where I would turn them over to the battalion headquarters." He said, "No I am not going to do that, if you want to take them back you take them back," another worthless replacement officer, I guess.

So, I got angry.

I put my Tommy gun over my shoulder and I told the Krauts to line up and follow me. I am supposed to be in charge of these prisoners and I certainly couldn't guide them. It was black out there and I said, "Get in front and get in back of me and follow me." I needed to watch both groups. Well, what they did was they surrounded me like a mother hen with all her little chicks, all these guys, I tumbled over them, I fell down, and I tripped over them. It had to be one damn comedy sketch. I finally got them back to the water's edge and turned them over. I asked one of the guys at battalion where C/Company was located and he gave me directions.

Anyway, I had to hike back, in the dark, from the water's edge along this footpath towards my company and I got maybe ten minutes into this walk, then all of the sudden I hear somebody yell "Hande Hoch!" which means in German "hands up" or "surrender."

I happen to look through this hedge which was maybe shoulder high and I saw some movement and they started firing at me. So, I took my Tommy gun and fired where I saw the most people. What I did was fire the whole clip, but fell down to reload and I was yelling, "surrender you son of a bitches, surrender you son of a bitches."

Someone yells back, "are you an American?" I said, "Oh my god I fired into my troops." I ran up, met one of these guys, and said, "Did I hit anybody, is anybody hurt?" He said, "No, no Americans were hit." But Germans POWs were hit. I fired right into the group of Germans they were holding. I didn't know they were prisoners you know.

But Hell, they were shooting at me! Did they care who the Hell I was? All we GIs wanted was to get home alive and nobody came this far now to get killed so close to the end. I don't know how many were wounded or how many killed or whatever. I didn't stick around to find out and as I was leaving to find my company, I was doing all this rationalization in my head, trying to say they were the enemy, you know, a good German is a dead German, that kind of thing. I was trying to justify what I did.

I never killed anybody close up.

I may have killed a few in shooting my M-1, my Tommy gun, or my BAR at a distance, but I cannot ever remember killing anybody at close proximity. I never remember taking any satisfaction in killing somebody, maybe I should be happy, glad, or satisfied or whatever that I didn't have a memory of doing that.

But I have guilt.

What I did do? I gave cigarettes to the enemy. I was supposed to be a tough, ruthless paratrooper. In my perspective it was a moment of charity. As I saw it, or told myself, Christian charity.

It was total weakness.

If anybody asks me if I killed any Germans? I would say, "Oh yeah, I killed some," but I never said how I killed them or wounded them. I take responsibility for killing and wounding German prisoners in a friendly fire moment. I thank God I didn't hit any of my own 82<sup>nd</sup> guys and I thank God they missed me too! But to this day, I do not forgive myself for passing out those goddamn Camel cigarettes to the enemy, the same guys who killed Stef and my brothers I saw dying in blood, pain and in tears.

It is my biggest burden.



## **8. THE WAR IS OVER: VE DAY**

We, the Allies, were overwhelming the Germans. There was always news coming to us over the radio that large groups of Germans were surrendering here and there. We were told to be aware of scattered unorganized resistance and to look out for fanatical Hitler Youth (HJ) terror groups. The thought in my mind was "I didn't come all this way to be killed by some 14-year-old HJ kid." That thought scared me. I was here to kill Germans not kids. We, the 82<sup>nd</sup>, were just moving forward into northeastern Germany, and it was at some point in that long trek north to the town of Ludwigslust, some Germans fired a machine gun at us from the crossroads up ahead of us and I said to myself "I am going into get them and take that machine gun nest out." I guess I wanted to get a Silver Star or some damn thing. That was my fantasy. I got down in a gully alongside the



road, it was along a wooded area. I got down on my hands and knees and started crawling towards the fire.

As I got closer to the machine gun position, I said to myself "What the Hell am I doing this for?" It didn't make any sense, you know, why am I doing this? The only reason I was doing this was I wanted to be a hero. I wanted to be recognized as a hero and get some kind of award that would recognize me as a hero. I was somehow trying to make up for giving those Krauts those damn cigarettes. Finally, I said "This doesn't make any sense and I'm getting out of here." I turned around

and crawled back out, I went back to the lines with my troops, and I got a mortar on that machine gun nest and we destroyed it.

As we advanced our position up the road, we passed by that German machine gun nest and, sure enough, the bodies of about three kids in HJ (Hitler Youth) black and brown uniforms and some adults laid dead scattered around the machine gun. What I remember about that vision was seeing a young girl laying there dead wide-eyed looking at the sky. She was just a kid. This made my blood boil. I was here to kill German soldiers not kids and this is what Hitler had done to his own people. The hate for brain washing such fanaticism into kids bothers me then and it does now. We have got to be careful when we talk about patriotism in our schools. I've seen the results of blind patriotism. I wasn't feeling any sympathy to German adults who allowed this to happen to their own kids. It was and is a crime.

The next day or so, we had an entire German Army surrender to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. Imagine that? An entire German Army surrendered to us! You are talking about 125,000 men, something like that, more than that maybe, I have no idea. But we now had the responsibility of taking care of them. What happened was they built barbed wire spool fences around these people so we could check them out process them break them up into groups officers, enlisted men, and other groups like the SS.

These Krauts were not wanting to run away. We were feeding them K-Rations and it was the first food they had had in days. I kept wondering "Where in the Hell did all this barbed wire come from?"

As the war was winding up, we (the 82<sup>nd</sup>) liberated a concentration camp in this area. I think it was called Wöbbelin. The bodies of the dead laid everywhere and the stench my God was intense. I threw up. So, we started burying the dead. The images we saw are nightmares. I won't and can't



describe them to you. It made those bodies I saw in the Hurtgen Forrest seem like nothing. We buried Jews and I think Russian, and other European POWs. There was another 200 or so corpses that remained. All I remember was General Gavin drove up in his Jeep to us. He was driving the Jeep himself and got out stood on top of the hood and was very emotionally upset and ordered us to stop the burying. Gavin ordered us "Go out and round up all the German civilians within a radius of 20 miles and all the German officers who surrendered to us who were sitting on their ass in barbed wire prison and bring them here!" There was this German Castle/manor and nearby

and not too far from that castle was a home where a Nazi Gauleiter had lived.<sup>2</sup> Once we got a group of all these krauts together, General Gavin made them dig burial places in this massive, massive perfect lawn in front of this majestic house, building or castle, whatever you want to call it. Gavin had them dig up those bodies we buried at the camp and brought these bodies from the camp to the Nazi estate. He made the German civilians march through this concentration camp and see what was done in their name by their government. He then held ceremonies for these dead people. He brought in the US Army Chaplain. We all, Germans too, attended.

How do you make sense of this all?

All I kept thinking was I gave these Nazi SOBs cigarettes and I cried not for the victims, but out of guilt. My guilt.

We got the word to stay put. No more advancing.

The war was over.

After what we had just been though at this death camp, it wasn't all that big of a deal.

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<sup>2</sup> A Gauleiter was the party leader of a regional branch of the Nazi Party for a given region/area. A very powerful political leader personally chosen by Adolf Hitler.

## 9. “SLIM JIM”



*I thought our interview was over and began picking up my recording equipment. We were going out to eat at a Mexican restaurant that Dutch loved nearby his home in Helendale, California. Dutch came over to me and put his hand on my shoulder and said that he had something for me. He gave me his personal copy of “On to Berlin” written by General James Gavin. General Gavin had sent him this book. Dutch and the General he loved so dearly stayed in touch over the years through letters. I honestly couldn’t accept this book knowing the emotional value it had for him. He said “Todd, son, take it, learn from it and remember you do not have to wear a uniform to be a hero. You are a teacher and have done more service for others in your life than I ever did as a soldier.” Nice of him to say that, but I will never, never, never accept that. Of course, I knew about General Gavin as a military commander and his legend as a WWII hero, but you could feel the love Dutch had for him. So, I just flippantly asked Dutch. “Why is ‘Slim Jim’ so special to you all in the 82<sup>nd</sup>?” I took my small pocket digital recorder with me to dinner just in case and laid it on the table as we ate tacos, enchiladas and chips, chips, chips. I am glad I did.*

Todd, Gavin, to me, was the epitome of what a leader should be like. I often said this and some of the higher-ranking people don't agree with it, but he had the soul of an enlisted man. Number one; he enlisted in the US Army. He was an orphan, and he ran away from his foster parents when he was seventeen years of age. He wanted to finish high school and go to college and they wanted him to work in the coal mines up in Pennsylvania. He didn't want too. He loved the military even when he was in school. He used to make all kinds of sketches and read as much as he could about the Civil War and all the wars that were fought up to that period of time. Anyway, he went to New York City when he ran away from home in upper state Pennsylvania.

He was adopted when he was two years old. He was a ward of New York City. His mother was an Irish immigrant and he did not know who his father was. He never knew his mother, never. He tried to find her for years, years, and years, but never could. But the Gavin family came from Wilkesboro, adopted him, and took him home. The wife, his adopted mom, was an alcoholic and his home life was combative and at times abusive. He ran away from home when he was seventeen and went to New York City. He was thinking about getting some kind of a job and instead went into the Army. He told them a white lie, he was only seventeen and he couldn't get into the Army at seventeen under normal circumstances, he told them he was an orphan. He was born one, but he wasn't then.

The recruiting sergeant had some kind of a deal with an attorney who would write up the papers where the attorney would take responsibility of being his "guardian" and this would allow him to enlist in the Army, even at seventeen, which he did. He was sent down to Panama Canal in a coast artillery outfit of all things. The first-sergeant was an Indian, an American Indian, and took a personal interest in Gavin. He saw Gavin had something going for him as a soldier. He encouraged Gavin to study for some kind of an academy for military people that they could study to gain interest into West Point, even though they didn't have the proper education. He only had eighth grade education. He went for it and ultimately passed the test and went to West Point.

That's America man. From a nobody to somebody.

He refers to West Point as his "mother." He was a boxer too. Can't you see the similarities between us now? He was also somewhere in the middle of his class with his academic grades. After he graduated from the academy, he spent eleven years bouncing back and forth in different military assignments, married a gal, and had a daughter by her. He and his wife did not get along too well. I think they got divorced not too long after the war. He went on a couple extended post-war military tours of duties on his own.

You know? That war ruined a lot of marriages and families. It did mine.

He finally was assigned to West Point as an instructor when he heard about a new idea in combat. The US Army was developing a vertical combat concept/philosophy which became the airborne paratroopers. He did whatever he could to get into airborne and he did. He went down and went

through jump school. After he got out of jump school, he became an assistant to General William Lee, who was really the father of airborne.

General Lee saw the skills that this young man had and assigned him as the person who did the research and development airborne. Gavin was responsible for coming up with a manual that served as the guide for airborne operations. Gavin studied all the German's efforts in airborne training, as well as Russia's. He was on his way to becoming a force in leadership to be reckoned within the airborne community. He ultimately was given the assignment of organizing the 505, which was his first dream of command realized, I suppose. He was a Major when he was working for General Lee and then took over the new regiment as Lieutenant Colonel, then ultimately became full colonel. He was still very young.

One of the things that were so remarkable about Gavin was Gavin built such a "Esprit de Corps" in his men. You know he had his new officers jumping out of second story windows practicing learning to land and roll. You know we enlisted men used to get into fights and used to think was nobody we couldn't take. We would tear up all kinds of bars, outhouses, roadhouses, and whatever. Nobody ever insulted a paratrooper without a fight. His junior officers used to go into the Officer's Club and tear that place up. They would jump out of bathroom windows. They would jump from the second floor. You know crazy, crazy stuff.

Did he approve of this stuff? Well, he didn't discourage it. So there's your answer.

Now he used to tell his new officers when they came in, "In this outfit you get your liquor rations LAST and you jump FIRST, and eat LAST too meaning your men ALWAYS come first. He built that into the unit. One of his colonels who I got to know well, was the first company commander in C/Company. Of course, he tells a story that when he reported to Gavin, and how he and four other lieutenants, when they were setting up the new regimental structure and Gavin said to these four lieutenants, "You are going to take over C/Company, you are going to be the Company Commander," and this lieutenant said, "Sir, I can't be the Company Commander, I'm not a Captain." Gavin said, "I know that, you are going to be the Company Commander son and pinned new captains' bars on to his collar." The claim was that when Gavin spoke softly, beware, that means he was going to strike. I started hearing all these stories about Gavin, before I even got into combat how he used to fight for his men and so forth. Then I started to see it in my company officers. I started to see that when they were making the ultimate sacrifice in combat. They were always in setting the example. You know, out in front, showing us the way. That was particularly true in combat. I saw Gavin, I can't tell you how many times, up in the front lines. The first day I was lost in Normandy he found me in the afternoon and placed me in a position. He was by himself too. He was our division commander, but he was out there all by himself taking care of us. You know he made four combat jumps as a General. Nobody else did that.

**NOBODY!**

He didn't have any bodyguards or any of that sort of thing watching over him. He was on his own. What he taught the early guys who founded the regiment was things that tilted down

through the junior officers, to the senior NCO's, to the Junior NCO's, down to the men, all the way down. I remember before we went into Normandy, he did reveille formation, the first formation in the morning, and gave us a ten-minute pep talk on being the first people who were going to jump into Fortress Europe, and what an honor that was. I remember saying to an old timer next to me, I said, "Is he for real?" He said, "You better believe it. He is for real." He believed it was an honor to go in and lose your life for your country. That's the kind of thing we would talk about when we talked about duty. We weren't talking about "bravery." Bravery was a given. Heroics was a given. When I say it was a given, these guys did it as naturally as breathing Todd, but what was so paramount was this sense of duty. Duty! Duty! Duty!

What does duty mean? That means that you pay whatever the price you have to pay. It means you do whatever you have to do to win and you don't bitch about it. Whatever it takes to conquer your enemy or your own fears...you do it. Whether it means giving your life or your soul. When you stop and think about it all my officers, all of my officers in C/company, were always out front not behind. Before I ever went into paratroopers, the officers I knew in the basic Army, the Coast Artillery, were all privileged. They took no risk. They were spoiled, but they weren't really soldiers in the strict sense of the word like my outfit was in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. My 505.

Gavin walked around the battlefield like he was invincible. They used to joke about being promoted to Gavin's aide-de-camp. All the previous ones had all been shot, wounded or killed but not ever Gavin not a scratch. Nobody wanted to let him down. Being pulled off the line for wounds or sick call was worse than anything. We wanted to stay together, fight together and if need be, die together. Let me tell you this story one about one of my platoon leaders before I joined the 505, Gus Sanders. He and many others were wounded in Sicily. They put him in a hospital in Alexandria Egypt. Now while he was recuperating, he had a chest wound, he heard that the 505 were going to make a jump in Rome. They were and they were scheduled to do it. He went AWOL, came back to the outfit, and hid his chest wound, from most people anyway. He was on the plane, and they canceled that jump at the very, very, last moment. It would have been death for everybody had they jumped into Rome. That was something Taylor screwed up in terms of misusing the Airborne for this operation, he was with 82<sup>nd</sup> then. Anyway, to make a long story short, when they found out that Sanders was on the plane chest wound and all, the powers to be went on that plane and said you are not jumping, you are getting out. They took him off...pulled him off really. He still had a stitched-up chest wound. He was going into combat and jump into Rome regardless. Had he done that he would have been dead. Now the same thing when he jumped into Normandy, he broke three or four ribs. He wouldn't let them evacuate him. He stayed out of combat a day and he had the first aid people bandage him up. He was the last company officer left in our battalion when we were relieved thirty-three days later.

That's duty!

That's duty. That's duty.

After the war, Gus came to the first reunion the C-company ever had. He had to go home after the second day, because he couldn't take the pressure. He had a breakdown, a nervous breakdown. He came to one more reunion and that was it. We never saw Gus after that. He obviously had psychological problems as a result of the war. But, these officers, guys like Johnny Johnson claimed that when he first met Gavin, he thought Gavin was, after his father and Jesus Christ, the most important man in his life. Part of it is hard to describe Todd, Gavin always looked out for us. That's love.

I can't tell you how many times I saw him in combat and what that would do to me. I felt safe. He dressed the same way we dressed. When the German Army surrendered to him at the end of the war, the officer they sent to negotiate terms with Gavin was all dressed up in a splendid uniform, medals and all that sort of thing, the German officer or General or whatever he was, was asking around where can I find General Gavin. Someone private said to this general, "Over there." General Gavin was dressed just like us, he had a dirty uniform on, and this general couldn't believe it. He couldn't believe that this guy was a general of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. He couldn't believe it.

That's the kind of guy Gavin was. You know, I've told you the story and I've written about it, I tell the story when the regiment was down in or Benning and a few of his men got arrested for public drunkenness, and some guys were having sex on a courthouse lawn. The police arrested them and the commander of the post really wanted to sock it to guys and Gavin said, "You are not socking it to them, you should be giving them medals because they are going overseas and fight for your ass." You know, that's the way he was, but then on the other hand, he took us on a 55-mile hike once, the whole damn regiment he took, because he thought we were getting to big for our britches. He led us through thick and thin with no sleep, one-hour sleep break, for over 24 hours. He marched them down there in the swamps of Georgia. He knew the game. He knew it well. He learned it well and that is why we loved him so much. One more story. Steph got his captain's bars. He was an original officer in the 505, but he was not the original company commander. He took over as the first lieutenant and when he got his captain's bars the company was very boisterous in applauding him, and congratulating him. You know they all were letting Steph know how much they loved him. You know, Steph was a replica of Gavin. That's why watching Steph die in Holland was so, so, so painful.

Combat with your men is an intimate experience, it's love on a different level. You'll never know about it Todd, at least I pray you'll never know love that way.

Be grateful young man. Be grateful

## **10. “BAND OF BROTHERS?”**

### **AH, COME ON...**

Now you've asked me about this "Band of Brothers" series and Ambrose's love for the 101<sup>st</sup>. Now don't get me wrong, my buddy Dick Winters is one Hell of a man. However, this series, this book makes it seem that the 101<sup>st</sup> won the entire goddamn war. This isn't jealousy, but we in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne know better. I think I know why and how this love affair Ambrose had for the 101<sup>st</sup> happened and the resulting media celebration we see today.

It started the day the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne booed General Eisenhower.

Publicly and very loudly!

Damn right we did!

That was after Normandy and it is an interesting story. One of the guys who was going to be decorated by General Ridgeway and General Eisenhower was a guy I went overseas with. He was getting the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) for holding the La Fiere Bridge with a bazooka. He was in the stockade (jail). They took him out of the stockade, dressed him all up, put a new uniform on him so he could get his medal at this ceremony from the bigwigs. When they were all through with him on stage, we saw him go down these steps and these chickenshit MPs took him away and pulled his clothes off not thinking we could see this, and put him in fatigues, and dragged him away to a waiting jeep to throw him back into the stockade. He was going to pay his dues whatever they were. Must have been something big. We all saw this and began yelling that "This was chickenshit and to let him go!" We were in a pretty sour mood as General Eisenhower took the stage.

Now when we left for France we were told if you made three jumps, you could go home on leave. Kind of like those deals to go home in the Army Air Corps who did 25 bombing missions and all that crap. We were told this and believed it. So, this was in our minds when Eisenhower began speaking. We thought he was announcing that he was giving us a break.

Now remember many guys in the 82<sup>nd</sup> had jumped in Africa, Italy, and now Normandy. That's three jumps buddy. But at the same time, Eisenhower was addressing the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, He said "He was proud of them and that as he relied on them in the past, so shall he rely on them in the near future." That meant we were not going anywhere. No leave in the States.

We were getting nothing.

What we ended up getting was a trip to Holland...

He said, holding this mic, that “He had other plans” for us and the entire 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment started booing the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force. Booing him big time. We were shouting cusswords at him really giving him the business. We stayed in formation but we were pissed.

It was Gavin who got us to calm down. He got up on a jeep’s hood and got us all to calm down. I’m told Eisenhower really reprimanded General Gavin and after that day Ike was always seen at 101<sup>st</sup> Screaming Eagles events. We rarely saw him.

The Screaming Eagles, his new favorite.

You know he was even going to give the 101<sup>st</sup> AB honors to march in the victory parade in Berlin. This was too much and Gavin stepped in and changed that. We earned it. The 101<sup>st</sup> was created and came out of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Todd. We were the senior Airborne Division with more jumps, more combat time, than any other US airborne division. While the 101<sup>st</sup> had Eisenhower, we had General Gavin.

So, we marched under the Brandenburg Gate celebrating our victory not over the Germans, but over the 101<sup>st</sup>!

So, now in later years, who becomes Eisenhower’s biographer?

Stephen Ambrose.

Who wrote “Band of Brothers?”

Ambrose.

So of course, his head was all full of this love from Ike for the 101<sup>st</sup>. Every time I talked to Ambrose and Winters, I told them to give the 82<sup>nd</sup> their just rewards, and kidded them that they were Ike’s lackeys and all of that.

They took it well, but the rest, they say... is history.

# NOW IT'S YOUR TURN...



## A MEMORY THAT LASTS...

*Now it is your turn to walk these fields. Maybe someday I'll join you. It is your turn to feel the emotions of this sacred place. You have the best experience awaiting you with DDMT. As you walk these fields, ride in these amazing jeeps, you'll no doubt ask yourself "Could I have done this?" I can tell you the answer, because I asked my Dad and Dutch this same question.*

*My father said "Hell, yes you could do this! You're an American and we rise to every occasion, to every challenge, from generation to generation. We never fail. Every generation is the 'Greatest Generation' son."*

*Now, stand up, hook up, shuffle to the door and jump!*

*It's 1944 and you are about to meet your rendezvous with destiny! —*

***AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY!***

***— TODD ANTON***

