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116-A ON D DAY

These notes were prepared by GC with seven survivors of the company. There were no disagreements over facts. The places of landing, as marked on the overlays, were readily pointed out by the men. There was no disagreement. ---HO

When the company was still 5000 yds out, the men saw the barrage from the rocket boats striking the water about 1000 yards to their right front. They saw nothing hit on their beach or anywhere near it. "A" came on in 6 assault boats. As they drew to within 700-800 yards of the beach, arty and mortar fire began to fall among the boats. There had already been loss; one boat foundered 1000 yards out from shipping too much water; one man had drowned and the others had been picked up by naval craft. At first the enemy shell fire was ineffective but as the first boats drew to within 50 yards of the sand, one was struck by an arty shell and two men were mortally hit, the others taking to the water.

The men recognized that they were coming straight into the designated landing point. They were at the sides looking toward the enemy shore. What they saw was an absolutely unblemished beach, unpocked by arty or bomb fire and wholly barren of shingle or any other cover. The first ramps were dropped at 0636 in water that was waist-deep to over a man's head. As if this had been the signal for which the enemy waited, the ramps were instantly enveloped in a crossing of automatic fire which was accurate and in great volume. It came at the boats from both ends of the beach. "A" had planned to move in three files from each boat, center file going first, then flank files peeling off to right and left. The first men tried it. They crumpled as they sprang from the ship, forward into the water. Then order was lost. It seemed to the men then that the only way to get ashore with a chance for safety was to dive head-first into the water. (Pvt Howard L. Grosser) A few had jumped off, trying to follow the SOP, and had gone down in water over their heads. They were around the boat now, struggling with their equipment and trying to keep afloat. In one of the boats, a third of the men had become engaged in this struggle to save themselves from a quick drowning. (Pfc Gilbert G. Murdock) That many were lost before they had a chance to face the enemy. Some of them were hit in the water and wounded. Some drowned then. Others, wounded, dragged themselves ashore and upon finding the sands, lay quiet and gave themselves shots, only to be caught and drowned within a few minutes by the on-racing tide. (Murdock) But some men moved safely through the bullet fire to the sands, then found that they could not hold there; they went back into the water and used it as cover, only their heads sticking out above it. Others sought the cover of under-water obstacles. Many were shot while so doing. Those who survived kept moving shoreward with the tide and in this way finally made their landing. (Murdock and Pfc Leo J. Nash) They were still in this tide-borne movement when "B" came in behind them. (Pvt Grosser) Others who had gotten into the sands and had burrowed in, remained in their holes until the tide caught up to them, then they, too, joined the men in the water. (Grosser)

Within 7-10 minutes after the ramps had dropped, "A" had become inert, leaderless and almost incapable of action. The company was entirely bereft of officers. Lieut Clyde N. Garing was back where the first boat had foundered. All of the others were dead, except Lieut Elijah Nance who had been hit in the heel as he left the boat, and then in the body as he reached the sands. Lieut Edward Tidrick was hit in the throat as he jumped from the ramp into the water. He went on to the sands and flopped down 15 feet from Private Leo J. Nash (Pfc). He raised up to



give Nash an order. Nash saw him bleeding from the throat and heard his words: "Advance with the wire cutters!" It was futile. Nash had no wire cutters, and in giving the order, Tidrick had made himself a target for just an instant, and Nash saw mg bullets cleave him from head to pelvis. German machine gunners along the cliff directly ahead were now firing straight down into the party. Captain Taylor N. Fellers and Lieut Benjamin R. Kearfott had come in with 30 men from "A" aboard LCA 1015, but what happened to that boat team in detail will never be known. Every man was killed; most of the bodies were found along the beach.

In those first 5-10 confused minutes when the men were fighting the water, dropping their arms and even their helmets to save themselves from drowning, and learning by what they saw that their landing had deteriorated into a struggle for personal survival, every sergeant was either killed or wounded. It seemed to the others that enemy snipers had spotted their leaders and had directed their fire so as to exterminate them. A medical boat team came in on the right of Tidrick's boat. The Germans machine-gunned every man in the section. (Nash) Their bodies floated with the tide. By this time the leaderless infantrymen had foregone any attempt to get forward against the enemy and where men moved at all, their efforts were directed toward trying to save any of their comrades they could reach. The men in the water pushed wounded men ahead of them so as to get them ashore. (Grosser and Murdock) Those who had reached the sands crawled back and forth into the water, pulling men to the land to save them from drowning, in many cases, only to have them shot out of their hands or to be hit themselves while in these exertions. The weight of the infantry equipment handicapped all of this rescue work. If left unhelped, the wounded drowned because of it. The able-bodied who pulled them in stripped themselves of equipment so that they could move more freely in the water, then cut away the assault jackets and the equipment of the wounded, and dropped them in the water. (Grosser, Murdock and Opl Edward M. Gurry.) Within 20 minutes of striking the beach, "A" had ceased to be an assault company and had become a forlorn little rescue party bent on survival and the saving of lives. Orders were no longer being given by anyone; each man who remained sound moved or not as he saw fit. The leading hand in the rescue work, by the account of all survivors, was a first-aid man, T/5 Tom Breedin.

It is estimated by the men that one-third of "A" remained by the time "B" hit the beach. One hour and 40 minutes after the landing, six men from the boat which had landed on the far right flank (Boat No 23) six men from "A" had worked up to the edge of the cliff. They saw no others from the company who had advanced as far. (Nash) Two of the men, Pvts Shefer and Lovejoy, joined a group from the Second Rangers, who were assaulting over the cliff to the right of "A", and fought with them through the day. Otherwise, "A"'s contribution to the attack appears to have been a cypher. The few survivors stayed at the cliff bottom during the afternoon and joined the Bn that night.