

Forgotten, never
June 6, 1944
Temperature 45 deg
Wind N @ 20 m.p.h.
Overcast



Forgotten, NEVER

Oh, I forgot....no! NEVER, on that September day of 1999, just 55 years after my baptism into the roaring hellish confusion of combat, (D-Day, June 5, 1944) was a most stunning day in my life. My questions, as I landed half-submersed in swampy water, and cold as the devil, I thought to myself, why am I here? For the next 368 days I asked myself no more. You see, I had volunteered to join the paratroopers some 19 months previous; and now, it was time for me to "pay off" my debt.

Let me explain. In September of 1999, I returned to Normandy with 40 other "old paratroopers" of 1944 vintage. We were all bent and with a stumbling walk, an uneasy gait, to mull over what we had done in 1944. It was silent mulling, just looking and seeing in our memories all of the faces of our own now dead comrades.

And I asked God, "Why did you spare me?"

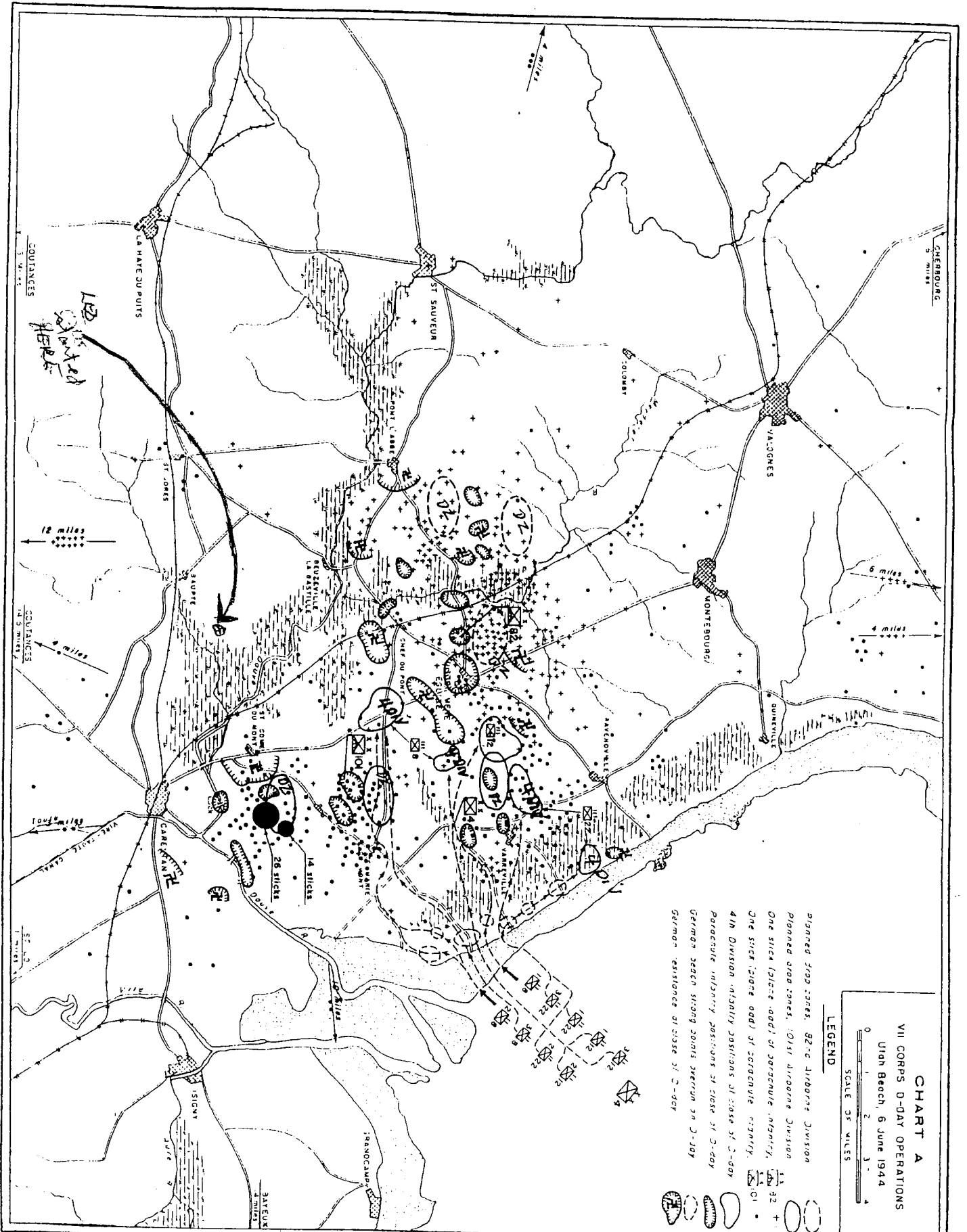
While we started our sojourn ten days earlier in Holland and Bastogne I was fortunate to meet a young English chap (Joe Hobbs), about age 35. He was accompanying our group not only in Holland and Bastogne, but also into Normandy. (REMEMBER, I first came to Normandy at 1:30 a.m. on June 5, 1944 with the 101st Airborne Division.) The trip was beautiful and for the next four days was the climax of my trip.

Joe Hobbs was on a job for the BBC broadcasting people to make a study of the British and American Airborne troops and what had happened to us old boys, both mentally and physically over the last 55 years. After the second day in the Normandy area, I asked him, if I showed him a military map where I landed, could he find that spot. He looked at the map and in three seconds, he said, "I'll take you right to it after we get to our motel for the night in St. Mere Elglise." We did. Five minutes later he drove me five miles south, then eight miles west, then one mile north, then one mile east and over a back road and the last one half mile over a cow trail. Yes, he took me right to it. To my amazement, Joe had at last put me near the spot where I touched down in Normandy over 55 years ago. First, I looked west to the position the enemy had held. Then, I turned around and looked east over the swamp. The sun was just about setting for the day and an eerie glow laid over the swamp. It was near seven miles across that area to the town of Carntan, which stood out like a white oasis. Now, I understood why I am still here and alive. I could have been dropped further into the swamp, but the Air Force drop me about 150 feet out into the water from "the levee". On one side water, from belly deep and up, on the other side, a German anti-aircraft position on the land side. I walked over to the levee from the trail (about 40 feet), and I looked east, then west, then east across the swamp. Yes, I thought of Mother and Dad and am I glad Mother never knew what I had gotten into for joining the paratroopers. It was a bleak and forbidding swamp, an eerie feeling came over me as I sat down on the levee bank. I cried - Joe left me alone for I suppose five minutes, as I let it all out. I "bawled like a bull". It was still a cold, dark and unfriendly

place, a most lonely and ugly swamp. Let one say no more. Had a good talk with "HIM" on that part of my life, asking him if HE could get me out of this alive, I would forever do his calling. As it was getting dark and the chill of the place still tried to penetrate me, I walked up to Joe. I suppose I had wet and red eyes, but I smiled at Joe and thanked him for his help and understanding to find this spot. He said, "I guess you feel better now". I hugged him and Joe Hobbs said, "Thanks, Yank, for what you and your fellow troopers did for us Limies back in 1944." I'm closing and all I can say.....Good God, thanks a million for allowing me to be kind to any fellow man, whether a comrade in arms, or any one of the Germans for their meanness perpetrated upon me by my enemy as a prisoner. Let me forever be appreciative all you, my God, have done for me. Give me many more little things I can do for some unfortunate child of YOURS, whether he or she is older or younger than I.

Thank you all for allowing me to unload on you my thoughts and feelings. It has been near 56 years in coming.....now, I feel better. I now know why HE has been asking me to do so many "wee jobs" for HIS children. I promised him, any job, big or small, would be okay with me. He has given me nearly 56 years to perform and I'm ready for more. I hope I can do them all to my age 107. That sounds like a ripe old age to shoot for. I do!

Exhibit "A"



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