



Basic training in the Army

Then came December 1941. Everyone was shouting that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. I was thinking oh no I could get drafted. I'm just at the right age. In the afternoon about 4:30pm we came in by boat from the drilling rig. There was a man in a suit on the dock. We need to know everyone's name. We think you might have missed the draft. Well he got me and Postlewhite. He was 3 years older than me. They made us fly to Miami Florida and sworn in February 7, 1942. Then we had to go to San Antonio, Texas and we were sworn in on the February 10, 1942. My first assignment was KP (kitchen police) 3 days before getting our military gear. Then we had to go to the barber shop to get our heads shaved. Next we got shots and vaccines. After a few days they taught us how to left face, right face, attention, about face and forward march. Starting off with your left foot first. Hardest thing for me was to do the rear march. Seems like I ran into everybody. Well after falling down a few times I figured out I had my leggings on with the hooks inside. The drill sergeant got a kick out of that. He said I should chew you out but I think you learned a lesson. Dodd's field in San Antonio was the receiving point in Texas at this time. We received the manual of arms with the 03 bolt action Springfield rifle. We then went to the rifle range to practice. We got a pool for 25 cents going of about 60 guys. I wound up being the best shot and won \$15.00. Guess living on the farm did help. I left the oil company making \$4.15 an hour to \$18.00 per month. We left Dodd's field on February 21st for Camp Howse close to Gainesville, Texas. I was a training division for two divisions. One was the 84 and the 86th division. I was assigned to the 86th division, company D first bn. It was the heavy weapons company which had the water cool 30 caliber heavy machine gun, 30 caliber light machine gun, Browning automatic rifle, 60 mm and 81 mm mortars and mi semi automatic rifle. We had 3 months training on all weapons, machine guns, mortar bars pistols and the mi pazoda. I was assigned the 03 Springfield rifle with scope for sniper use. Again I won best shot. I also got promoted to private first class (PFC). We departed Camp Howse in the middle of May 1942 to go to camp Livingston Louisiana for maneuvers. We took turns on the simulated battlefields. One side was the enemy and the other side was the friendly force. We ran night patrols on compass readings and the infiltration course where they fired live rounds over your head to get you used to the noise and to learn how to crawl to get to your destination. While we were coming to the close of our maneuvers, 16 men, including myself, were being sent to Fort George Meade in Maryland. That was about July 1942. In Fort Meade we had more training such as long marches with full field packs, infiltration courses and pulling guard at night using the counter sign and giving pass words. We again went to the rifle range but this time I was given the sniper rifle 03 for further use. I was promoted to Corporal and now I was getting about \$66.00 per month. Getting up on the pay! For a week we pulled guard around the white house with the same 16 men that came with the 86th division. I had the honors, scared to death, of pulling guard in the west wing, the President's office. I can still hear Franklin D saying keep up the good work soldier. I remember Eleanor coming past me not saying a word. I the later part of August we departed Fort Meade to Camp Shanks, New York. We were briefed there and were to sail on the El DeLa France to Golasco, Scotland. Then to



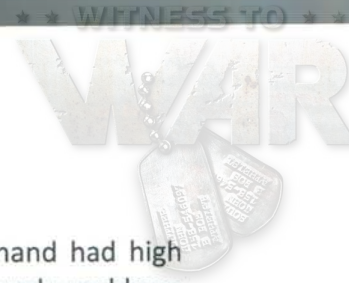
England to be assigned to the 1st infantry division. Then in the later part of September we arrived at the at Wilshire England, Tidworth barracks.



Assigned to the 1st infantry division.

The 1st infantry division left New York on August 2nd, 1942, destination Scotland. It arrived on the 9th of August. Then it moved south into England. Established itself at Tidworth barracks at Wilshire. The next few weeks saw the unit put through intensive training in amphibious warfare. The men did not know it, but time was of the essence as the allies had committed themselves a major amphibious operation in early November. In late October, the division had already begun to embark on the transport gathering in Scotland and speculation was ripe as to the ultimate destination. Many thought Europe, but they were wrong. Their mission would take them much farther afield. Operation "Torch" was to take the "Big Red One" to the shores of North Africa. The 1st and the 79th division were about to become one of the first units to fight in the European operation. I was in the 1st battalion, 16 infantry regiment, came ashore at Z red and immediately took two small villages, Damesme and St Leu and then swung eastward along the coast road. In the direction of La Macta some nine miles distance it was defended by vichy forces and the 1st battalion. The action resumed on the 9th of November 1942 although the landing forces were dogged by supply problems in port because rough seas had prevented the unloading of vessels on the invasion seashores.

The 26 regiment advanced toward Oran by way of Ferme Combiere, was not able to continue until the afternoon and was quickly brought under heavy shell fire from batteries on Cap Falcon and from Vichy forces holding hills close to Mers El Kebir. The attack stalled. The east coast, 16th and 18th launched an attack on St Cloud. Advancing from three sides early in the morning, they fought their way into the village but were halted by heavy resistance by noon. A new attack was planned but the Commander General Terry Allen called a halt deciding that St Cloud could be masked by one of his battalions while the remainder would simply move around it and prepare for a much strengthened Vichy forces, some of whom were able to infiltrate behind US positions. Urgent calls went out for air, ground and navel support but these proved unnecessary as the battalion beat off the French. After nightfall it was relieved at LA Macta and sent to rejoin the rest of the regiment for the advance on Oran. The converted drive on Oran, which involved armored units and the 1st division was scheduled to begin at 0715 on the 20th although some of the division units had barely completed the reorganization needed to launch the advance. This was spearheaded by US armored forces from the south of Oran. The 1st division chief role was to advance to its eastern suburb from around St. Cloud. Despite scattered resistance, the armored columns pushed forward rapidly into Oran and were able to link up with the 1st division shortly before its attack on the eastern suburb was launched. The local Vichy commander agreed that cease fire should begin at 12:15pm but the events had progressed so quickly that the 26th regiment did not receive the news for some time and was still battling around Mers El Kebir and hour later. The taking of Oran had cost the US forces less than 400 casualties. "Operation Torch" had proved a success, but it was only the first phase of a more ambitious plan. This was to involve a rapid drive eastward into Tunisia and another French Colony. Its capture would make any further resistance by axis forces in North Africa extremely difficult as they would face the enemy on two fronts. Advancing westward, General Bernard Law, Montgomery's British eighth army, which had recently won the battle of Alamein, was slowly pursuing the remnants of the African korpo through Egypt and Libya while the

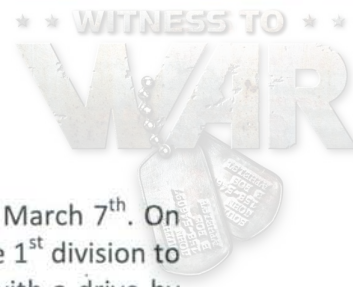


"Torch" forces were to push eastward at full speed at which the allied command had high hopes of a quick victory but not realized due to a combination of bad weather, supply problems and securing a definitive armistice with the Vinchy authorities.



The battle for Tunisia

German air forces and the rapid buildup of axis forces in Tunisia, the great advances from west and east toward the Vichy colony following operation "Torch" and the battle of Alamein had stalled. Eisenhower bluntly told his senior American, British and French field commanders on Christmas Eve, gentleman we have lost the race for Tunisia. The worsening of bad weather would prevent any major offensive against Tunisia until spring. His forces would have to hold on to the positions they occupied which ran roughly north and south through central Tunisia from coast to coast a few dozen miles west of Tunisia to a position a few miles south of El Guettar. It was a long line. Some 250 miles and the allied troops were spread thinly along it. Elements of the 1st infantry division which often fought independently had already been involved in the failed battle for Tunisia by the time Eisenhower gave his depressing summary of the campaign. Shortly before Christmas the commander of the British Vcorps, General W. Alfrey, planned a push from Medjez El Bab south of the river Medjerda towards Tunis by way of Ksartyr and Massicault led by the British 6th armored brigade. It also involved the 1st battalion 18th infantry which was to support an attack by the coldstream guards on commanding 900 ft heights of the Djebel Almera, better known as the longstop hill and only 25 miles from Tunis. The guards attacked in appalling weather and evicted a battalion of the German 69th Panzer Grenadier regiment from longstop late on the 22nd and handed it over to the 18 rct, which was forced off the heights the next day. The guards recaptured the hill on Christmas Eve, but the Germans again launched swift counter attacks and regained possession on the 25th. In the few days of fighting the 18 rct had 356 men killed, wounded or taken prisoner. At Kassarine, A mixed force under Colonel Alexander Starks, included element of the 1st infantry division came under severe German pressure as night fell. The attack by the German 10th panzer division was heralded by the scream of the New Nebelwerfer rocket launchers and attacked by dive bombers. What followed was confused. The night of the 19 and 20th of February cannot clearly be constructed from the record. Certainly company A of the 26th regiment was surrounded as of the record. The other companies went out of battalion control. Stragglers reported the situation after daylight. What is clear is that the first line of defense collapsed and the troops, American and French fled west through the pass toward Thalda. On the 21st, the battle batter allied line, a hodge-podge of intermingling units, awaited the next German attack. The 21st was the turning point in the battle. Fresh allied reserves hastened south to bolster the line, heavy artillery fire and indinian among some German officers swung the battle in the allies favor. Rommel ordered a withdrawal which was conducted with great skill. Following slowly, the allies had regained most of the front line they had occupied before opening of the German offensive within the week, however Kasserine had taught them a sharp lesson. It had highlighted the need for many improvements in combat training and to organize the coalition forces to the highest degree. The lesson had been costly. Fredendalls US 11 corps some 30,000 men had suffered and 6,500 killed wounded or taken prisoners, while close to 400 armored vehicles, 200 artillery pieces and 500 soft skinned vehicles had been abandoned or destroyed. All the problems of Kasserine the allied forces remained in peing and within a few months would complete the destruction of the remaining axis units in North Africa. Fredendall who had performed poorly in the Kassarine fighting was removed from command of the US II corps and replace by General George Patton,



who set about instilling some order and discipline on its battered formation on March 7th. On March 8th the 1st division was formerly assigned to the II corps. The corps with the 1st division to the fore, returned to offensive action in late March operating in conjunction with a drive by Montgomery's eight army against the German held mareth line in the south of Tunisia. On the 16th of March the division advanced as a unified unit for the first time, advancing east from Gafsa through El Guettar prior to attacking on the 21st. The battle opened with the 26th RCT and the 1st rangers securing the left flank and then the bulk of the division pushed forward. By the 22nd division was holding positions on a ridge of mountains running south from Djebel and then westward across the road from El Guettar to Gabes to the Djebel berda which was by two battalions of the 18th RCT. An axis counter attack led by the Panzea division was beaten off on the 23rd due to heavy fire from the division artillery. The 18th recorded the defeat of the German armored. Troops started to appear from all directions, mostly from tanks, hit anti-tank company and 3rd battalion. Our artillery crucified them with high explosive shells and they were falling like flies. Tanks seemed to be moving to the rear, those that could move. The two battalions of the 18th RCT on the Djebel berda were forced to withdraw two miles during the 25th but blocked any further German movement. Despite these early advances, the allied pushed Gabes were brought to an end on the 5th of April. On the 28th while the 16 regiment temporarily took hill on 523 on May 1st. The German defenses seemed in tatters and looked possible the US 1st armored division would be able to push into the open terrain beyond the hills, but vicious counter attackers prevented any immediate exploitation. However the decisive breakthrough came elsewhere and the defeat of the axis forces in Tunisia followed within two weeks. The formal surrender came on May 13th and 200,000 axis troops went into captivity. For the 1st division the fight for North Africa was over, but it marked only the end of one chapter of its war against the axis forces in Europe. My comments as the ?, why did Patton and Rommel hold the war up for two hours, approaching with tanks and white flags flying. They passed right by me and I heard Rommel say I'll see you later. He said you haven't won yet. My 1903 sniper rifle came in handy.



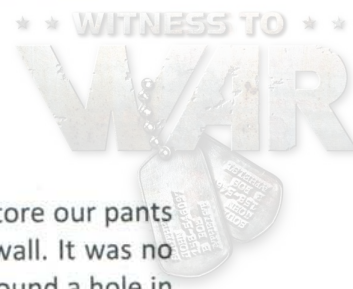
The 1st division back in England

The 16th infantry regiment under Col George a Taylor was based at Parham house near Beamisnster England. During the next few weeks the division would be brought up to strength with new replacement and begin the process of preparing for the invasion of Normandy. Code name operation "Overlord". A note from General Bradley, much as I dislike subjecting the 1st division to still another landing I felt as a commander that I had no other choice. My job is to get to the shore and destroy the Germans. I felt compelled to employ the best troops I had to bring the odds in our favor anyway that I could. As the division settled into their new billets in South West England the grumbling became less evident. Indeed many took pride in belonging to a unit that was considered vital to operation overlord. During January to May 1944 the division took a wide variety of training exercises. They were practicing with the equipment needed to crack beach defenses. The landing craft used were LCI's landing craft infantry. 31 men to 1 boat. After 4 months the announcement that the 82nd airborne was short of men that had prior work experience and was interested in being a paratrooper. After making 2 scared jumps I decided to stay with the 1st division. D Day was on the way very soon.



Landing on Omaha beach June 6th, 1944

Many of the amphibious duplex drive (DD) Sherman tanks which were suppose to land slightly ahead of the infantry to suppress enemy fire had been swamped in the channel. Most had been off load far too far from the shore and quickly foundered in the rough waters whipped up by 10 to 18 knot northwesterly winds that smashed the flimsy canvas "skirts" that supposedly gave the DD tanks buoyancy. Others were lost when the LCT's carrying them hit submerged mines or were smashed by German artillery. Of the 29 earmarked for easy Red, 21 were swamped on the run in. One was sunk by a landing craft and two were destroyed in the shallows by German fire. The outcome of all these factors was that the defenders were alert mostly unscathed and holding virtually in that positions as the assault infantry headed for the beach. They had expected to come ashore and fight their way inland against smashed defenses and their few remaining demolitionist defenders while being supported by the tanks and armored bulldozers, that they would quickly create paths through the German defense, instead they would be virtually alone. The first and second landing in the 1st wave although with no support from the DD tanks. The job of their assault teams usually platoons of 30 men, was to deal with pre designated points of enemy resistance while demolition teams cleared the beach defenses to ease the way for the following waves. However rough seas and the turning tides confusion and enemy fire resulted in many of the first and later companies landing in the wrong point. As the Higgins boat touched bottom many landing crafts had already gotten stuck on hidden sandbars. Many were hit and assault troops walked in to a hail of enemy fire from the front and flank as they struggled through the shallows and across the sand for the shingle bank or took cover behind obstacles. Casualties were heavy particularly among the junior officers. Some men hurried to the comparative safety of the shingle banks. Others huddled as best they could among the German sea defense. Others acted on their own initiative slowly fought their way off the murderous beach. As a few small scattered groups made their way up to the bluffs, many others remained pinned down behind the shingle bank. At around 0800 the 16th regiment's commander, 47 year old George Taylor came ashore and made his way to the bank. Surveying the leaderless troops around him amidst the enemy fire. He galvanized nearby troops with a few words: There are only two kinds of people on this beach. The dead and those that are about to die. So let's get the hell out of here! The men moved gradually forward. Bangalore torpedoes were used to blow caps in barbed wire. Paths were cleared through mine fields and marked, and flamed throwers and satchel chargers were used to neutralize pill boxes. Slowly but surely the defense between the beach and the bluffs were reached. Meanwhile me and the? With my squad of 12 men were unloaded from the LST the larger boat, climbing down the rope ladder onto the Higgins (LCI) boat about 2 miles out. The wind was strong and visibility wasn't good. We were receiving heavy gun fire from lager guns from shore. I couldn't tell where they were firing from. We were about ½ mile from the beach when another Higgins boat rammed our boat broadside. We were scattered in about 7' of water. I yelled at my men to stay close to each other and try not to get separated. Well trying to swim with all our gear was impossible. After we shed all our gear, except weapons, we had to walk 2 or 3 steps and jump up for air. At this time noticed when I came up I thought I saw someone not how many. After a while using this method of walking and jumping up for air the water started to get shallow. Then



we hit another problem. We hit barbed wire which took a while to untangle and tore our pants half off. I notice that had only two men left. We finally made it to the retaining wall. It was no use asking where the other men were because I did not know myself. We finally found a hole in the wall and peeped through it. What we saw was devastating. Dead men everywhere due to crisscross machine gun fire. I told my men if we get to shore play dead until night comes. Well we made it to the beach and there we played dead. It was only a short time laying on the beach when someone from nowhere flopped down beside me and we just looked at each other. Then he asked me if I was lost. I told him, I guess you couldn't put it any plainer. I didn't even ask him what unit he was from. He said let's stay here until dark and then try and make it to those trees by the little gully. By the time it started to get dark the anti aircraft guns were shooting at planes overhead and flack was coming down like rain. He said let's try to make it. I motioned my 2 men to come on. I was close to the gully when something hit my nose, and it hurt like the dickens. He found a RA from somewhere and that is what had hit against my nose. To stop the bleeding we remained in the gully all night. The next morning things were a little quieter and he said let's find a way to get you evacuated. He started asking different people. They would only say "we don't know". Later on that day he found out that there was a glider that was coming to pick up a load of wounded men to be taken to South Hampton England. He got me on the glider and shook hands with me and said "Good Luck". To this day I still do not know who he was or what unit he was from, but he sure stuck with me and my two men. I noticed that the glider has a big ring on the top for the C47 to be able to pick it up on the move. When I arrived in England a bunch of doctors and medics decided who went where. After an hour on waiting finally a doctor motioned for me to following. After examining my nose he advised me that they needed to put a plastic plate in my nose. He said about ¼ of bone was missing from the cartilage. After the surgery the doctor told me I would be there for 7 days and then they would decide my destination. Well during the next few days my? Started to but in and telling me what to ask the doctor. Well the 7 days came and the doctor told me it was up to me where I wanted to be assigned, but not back to the US. I asked if I could be assigned back to my 1st division. He said he would find out and let me know. The next day they told me that the 1st was in Normandy destination unknown. And some unknown colonel had contacted the division personnel informing them of my location. He said Colonel George Taylor, 16th regiment wished me and my 1903 good luck. The doctor looked at my nose and said, wherever you are assigned be sure you can get the medics to give you a penicillin shot every day for the next 3 days. Well on June 15, 1944 about 9 am, some 1st lieutenant from the 79th infantry asked me like to join the unit. He said he talked to the doctors and they said they still had my 1903 rifle wrapped up for me. He asked why I was carrying a rifle he had never heard of before. I told him I only used the weapon when I needed. He looked at me kind of funny and then asked me if I would like to joint Eisenhower's special division. I looked at him and said "what the hell" just get me some clothes and sign me up. The lieutenant took me to the 315 infantry regiment and I was introduced to Lt Colonel Holden, battalion commander of the 1st battalion 315 infantry. I was assigned to company D, Captain John Potts. (Note see book).