

### III -- ARGENTAN - THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

"I joined the Bn as a replacement officer just before the Argentan battle. I was first assigned to "Sv" Btry and was with the Ammo Train. One day Lt. (Edward) Bar, the Motor Officer, asked if I wanted to ride up to Div Arty. As we approached the Div Arty CP, a recon jeep came roaring into the area at a high rate of speed. Sitting on the hood of the jeep was a captured German officer, his feet were on the front bumper and a machine gun was pointed at his back. I think the German was more afraid of being thrown off the jeep and getting killed than he was of the machine gun.

"Before we could dismount, Gen. (Edmund) Searby came over and told Lt. Bar to go back and tell Col. (Daniel) Minahan to get ready to go to war. I thought: 'This is it.'

"Back at the Ammo Train, which was dispersed in the area of a chateau, the trucks were loaded and waiting for a call for ammo from the firing batteries. The battle had started up the road and the noise was incredible. A Frenchman, who was a barber, came into the area and started cutting some of the men's hair. He had a good looking daughter with him who attracted a lot of attention.

"About mid-afternoon the battle was really raging up ahead. At this time, a horse drawn carriage was brought around to the front of the chateau. The lady who lived in the chateau came out to the carriage and went for her usual afternoon ride. I could not help but wonder about the stupidity of some people." -- Richard Lee

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"One of the many things I recall about Argentan took place, I believe, on the first night after the battle started. Our Liaison Crew attended a meeting of the Infantry Bn COs that was held in a small cemetery somewhere south and east of the city. The area soon came under intense artillery fire and we were forced to utilize whatever shelter the tombstones and stone wall fence would provide. This was the first time I had been under such constant artillery fire and it was frightening to say the least. I don't remember if there were any casualties but there was extensive damage to the tombstones and some of the graves were actually opened up by the explosions.

"I'm sure the meeting seemed to last a lot longer than it actually did. I recall crouching between two tombstones and thinking that if we didn't get the hell out of there soon we would all join the permanent residents." --- Anthony DiPangrazio

"Argentan was an unbelievable slaughter of both men and animals. I was surprised to see so many destroyed horses and horse drawn vehicles. I can still shut my eyes and see a young German soldier lying with his head and shoulders on a log as though he were looking over it. He had mud and dirt splattered in his face and eyes." --- Frank Lankford

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"When Argentan was taken, I was transferred from "Sv" to "C" Btry. Capt.(Clarence -'Chief') Boston asked if I wanted to go up and look over the battle area. As we approached a field that was covered with wrecked materiel, I saw a large white skin behind shining in the sun. I thought it was a fat German who was caught with his pants down. It turned out to be a huge whole dressed hog that had been blasted out of a German kitchen truck.

"The British were already on the field collecting war booty. Frenchmen were on hand taking all of the uninjured horses. I brought back a German motorcycle with a sidecar.

"It would take a book to describe adequately the smell, the dead, the horses, both dead and alive, the destroyed guns, trucks and wagons. Others have referred to this scene of devastation. I will just endorse their recollections as my own." -- Richard Lee

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"Everyone talked about the devastation at Argentan. Most of us in the gun sections missed the visual horrors of that battle. All we ever saw were the members of our crew, the cooks, and the ever present 1st Sgt." --- Chet Rutkowski

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