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WITHDRAWAL SHEET

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FOIA ID: 1165/F00-154, Jones

File Folder: Omaha Beach Remarks – June 6, 1984 (2)

Date: 09/17/2003

DOCUMENT NO. & TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
1. memo	John March to Sec. of Defense re insert for President's D-Day speech, 1p <i>R 7/10/06 F00-154#5</i>	5/24/84	B1
2. Insert	Re: Draft Presidential Remarks, 1p <i>R " " " #6</i>	Nd	B1

RESTRICTIONS

- B-1 National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA].
- B-2 Release could disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA].
- B-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA].
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- B-7 Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA].
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- B-9 Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA].

Julie (Peqqy)

This is the officer I spoke to
you about for possible inclusion in
the remarks at Omaha.

Pete.

Julie Case Rm 111 1/2
E&B

To Speechwriters

Thomas D. Howie

MAJ

0-261582

116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division

Virginia

KIA 17 July 1944

Plot G Row 14 Grave 12

Normandy American Cemetery (Omaha)

Thomas Dry Howie "The Major of St. Lo"
(1908 - 1944)

Biographical Data:

- Born: April 12, 1908, Abbeville, South Carolina
- Parents: Mr. and Mrs. T. V. Howie
- Wife: Elizabeth Payne Howie, 319 Vine Street,
Staunton, Virginia 24401
(still living)
- Education: Abbeville High School, 1925
The Citadel, 1929 (President of Class)
Football, boxing and Rhodes scholar
candidate
- Civilian occupation: Teacher (English Literature)
and coach (football and boxing)
at Staunton Military Academy
- Military: Second Lieutenant, 116th Infantry,
Virginia National Guard when federalized
in 1940

Operations officer (S-3) for 116th on
D-Day

Appointed commander 3rd Battalion, 116th
in July 1944.

Killed in action near St. Lo, France,
July 17, 1944.
- Decorations: Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart,
Croix de Guerre with Palm, French
Legion of Honor.

Remarks

Major Tom Howie came from Staunton, Virginia. He commanded the National Guard company from his town, and only days before he died he rose to command a battalion of the 116th Infantry Regiment. History and his own abilities brought him here to France where he still lies. He was killed by a mortar shell on July 17, 1944 as he prepared to lead his battalion into St. Lo. He took St. Lo, nonetheless. His men carried Tom Howie on a litter and laid him on the rubble of St. Croix church. Today in "Howie Square" of St. Lo and in this cemetery his sacrifice is permanent. We can honor his life by staying strong to keep the peace, or we can erase his sacrifice by again allowing aggression to grow strong.

Tom Howie was the finest his generation could offer. Tempered by the depression and then by the war he and his contemporaries had, in that old-fashioned word, "character." We owe them a priceless debt, for they saved our freedoms. We cannot repay them; we can only rededicate ourselves to those eternal virtues which they embodied-courage and perseverance and sacrifice.

New York Times, July 19, 1944

Body of Major Slain in St. Lo Battle Leads His Troops Into Fallen Town

Massive American Assault by Tanks and Infantry Throws Germans Out After Eight-Day Hard-Fought Siege

By HAROLD DENNY

By Wireline to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WITH AMERICAN FORCES, in Normandy, July 18—St. Lo fell this evening before a massive American assault—and one battalion's entry was led by the body of its major, who had died in the assault.

Tonight our men in tanks, armored cars and jeeps, and in small infantry groups afoot, are combing through the town's rubble-strewn streets and wrecked buildings, wiping out the last remnants of resistance. Meanwhile, the Germans are heavily shelling the town and its approaches from high ground to the east, west and south, which they still hold. Our artillery is replying thunderously.

The Germans had largely evacuated the town during yesterday and last night, but, according to their custom, they had left isolated snipers' and machine-gun posts at good defensive points within the town. They had also stationed strong forces armed with machine guns, machine pistols and mortars in positions that our men had to smash up before they could occupy the city.

The Germans had also brought up additional artillery in the past few days and had their guns "zeroed in" all along the roads over which our troops had to pass. They fired heavily on us all day and were still going it strong tonight. It is obvious that the Germans, having held this key bastion of their defensive line on this front until they could no longer afford their heavy casualties, intend to make the town as uncomfortable as possible for our forces until they have been driven off the hills.

End of Three-Week Campaign

But today brought a triumphant end to the campaign to take this obscure but militarily vital provincial town, the capital of the Department of La Manche, which has gone on for three hard weeks. The past four days and nights have been filled with incessant, desperate fighting at the very gates of the town. The victory was won, furthermore, by troops who had been fighting without respite for weeks. But no one would have guessed that to see the confidence and verve with which they moved up those shell-blasted paths today.

The actual capture of the town was accomplished at 6 P. M. by a task force of tanks, infantry, reconnaissance vehicles and special arms organized with the purpose of smashing the way into the town once and for all against whatever resistance might be offered. The first entrance into the town in any force, however, was made at 10 A. M. by troops of a battalion that, it is now permissible to say, had been cut off by the Germans for thirty-six hours after it had

"We're in now and they'll never get us out."

Following the vanguard of fighting troops came ambulances, medical corpemen and jeeps loaded with military police, ready to take over policing and traffic control as soon as we were in the town, and a civil-affairs team. A civil-affairs team composed of experts in many fields goes into each place that we take and immediately begins helping the town to get back to normal. These civil-affairs administrators are not supposed to go in with the first wave, but this team virtually did.

Civil Affairs Chief Kills German

St. Lo's civil-affairs team was commanded by a colonel from Philadelphia. He did not wait for his place in the procession but went in with the attacking troops. At the entrance to the town, a German stepped out and pointed a gun at him. The colonel whipped out his pistol and shot him dead.

The task force emerged from its forest rendezvous and moved boldly onto the main road from Isigny, which enters St. Lo from the northeast. More troops crouched in ditches and foxholes at either side of the road, ready to come in afterward and consolidate. The road winds in repeated "S" turns just before it enters the town, so we could not see what was happening at the head of the column. There was heavy shell-fire at the edge of the town, however, and we could hear machine guns. Then we heard the fire of our tanks.

Word came back that a strong force of German grenadiers was in the wooded hills just south of the entrance to the town, holding up our advance with automatic weapons and mortars. Our tanks and infantry had to go in and clean them out before the column could go farther. This took some time; then the column moved ahead again. It must have been about 5:30 then and our vanguard was getting well into the town.

Other Troops Enter Town

While the task force was staging its cavalcade the troops who had been steadily battling to the city from the east along the Bayeux and lesser roads and paths moved on into the city. They had had some of the hardest fighting that our men had endured since D-day and they had fought their way out of great perils. Eminent among their adventures was that of the two lost battalions.

One of these, commanded by Major Sidney V. Bingham of Dallas, Tex., worked its way to the most forward position at the hamlet of La Madelaine, on the Bayeux road, last Saturday. The front there was extremely fluid. There were no real battle lines, but the troops fought their way ahead wherever they could and held on.

OFF REPRODUCTION COPY

The Germans had also brought up additional artillery in the past few days and had their guns "zeroed in" all along the roads over which our troops had to pass. They fired heavily on us all day and were still going it strong to night. It is obvious that the Germans, having held this key bastion of their defensive line on this front until they could no longer afford their heavy casualties, intend to make the town as uncomfortable as possible for our forces until they have been driven off the hills.

End of Three-Week Campaign

But today brought a triumphant end to the campaign to take this obscure but militarily vital provincial town, the capital of the Department of La Manche, which has gone on for three hard weeks. The past four days and nights have been filled with incessant, desperate fighting at the very gates of the town. The victory was won, furthermore, by troops who had been fighting without respite for weeks. But no one would have guessed that to see the confidence and verve with which they moved up those shell-blasted paths today. The actual capture of the town was accomplished at 6 P. M. by a task force of tanks, infantry, reconnaissance vehicles and special arms organized with the purpose of smashing the way into the town once and for all against whatever resistance might be offered. The first entrance into the town in any force, however, was made at 10 A. M. by troops of a battalion that, it is now permissible to say, had been cut off by the Germans for thirty-six hours after it had gone to the relief of another battalion that had been isolated for two days.

This battalion had written one of the brightest of the many heroic chapters of this campaign and its commander, a major who may not yet be identified, had led it with conspicuous gallantry until his death in action. Only two days ago I was visiting him in his command post in a ditch, and he was talking of this town, toward which he had been leading troops.

Major Honored in Death

But the major, after all, did not lose the honor of entering the town for which he had given his life. His body, accompanied by a chaplain, was taken to a dressing station and there it was placed in an ambulance by the order of the commander of the troops in that immediate sector. The ambulance was put in the place of honor at the head of a non-combatant section of the task force and, after the tanks and infantry had blazed a path, the major's body was escorted into the town, flanked by a guard of honor in armored cars.

After the decision that no more delay in the capture of the town could be brooked, preparations for a strong task force were made. This afternoon it assembled in the woods a few miles north of St. Lô under the command of a general who informed his forces that they were going to take the town if they had to go through all hell to get it. He was in the forefront of the battle all day and, when I saw him last, he had been slightly wounded in the arm. He had it bandaged where he stood, however, and was staying at a heavily shelled turn in the road at the town's entrance, urging his men to get through that shellfire quickly.

"Have we got the town for keeps?" I asked him then.

"You bet we have," he answered.

at either side of the road, ready to come in afterward and consolidate. The road winds in repeated "S" turns just before it enters the town, so we could not see what was happening at the head of the column. There was heavy shellfire at the edge of the town; however, and we could hear machine guns. Then we heard the fire of our tanks.

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One of these, commanded by Major Sidney V. Bingham of Dallas, Tex., worked its way to the most forward position at the hamlet of La Madel'ne, on the Bayeux road, last Saturday. The front there was extremely fluid. There were no real battle lines, but the troops fought their way ahead wherever they could and held on. The enemy closed in behind Major Bingham's men and ceaselessly bombarded them. He held on. He had a field radio, with which he communicated with his regiment—cautiously, because the Germans could listen in.

Gradually his battalion used up its food and ammunition and there were wounded to be cared for. The radio's battery failed and he was silent. The day before yesterday, another battalion of the same regiment fought its way to Major Bingham's, taking in supplies. But the Germans closed in behind this battalion also so both battalions were isolated. Last night, troops further back tried to run in supplies by armored cars, but they could not make it. Later, combat patrols took food and munitions in and stayed with the men to help them fight. Blood plasma for the wounded was dropped by planes.

For all their sufferings the men of these battalions had enough drive left to enable them to attack at 4 A. M. today and they got to the city. But early in the attack one major was killed—the major whose body was borne in state into St. Lô this evening.

New York Times, July 20, 1944

THE MAJOR ENTERS ST. LO

The major's name is not yet known. Last Sunday he led his battalion up the Bayeux road to a hamlet called La Madelaine, in front of St. Lo. There he reinforced another gallant officer, Maj. Sidney V. Bingham of Dallas, Tex., and there both battalions found themselves surrounded. All Sunday night, all day Monday and half of Tuesday they lay exposed to the enemy artillery. A few men, replacements unused to fire, fell back a little. A sergeant talked to them. After that they were as good as the others. On Tuesday, with Major Bingham and the unnamed major at their head, they proceeded toward St. Lo, apparently with many Germans still behind them and plenty along the way. Like all such advances in Normandy, this was a slow and deadly walk. Men were wounded and men died. The walk continued. Late in the afternoon a strong task force, commanded by a general with a bandaged arm, barged in on the connecting road from Isigny and finished the job. St. Lo was taken.

That same evening the unnamed major rode into St. Lo. He rode in state, with armored cars acting as his guard of honor. He rode like the Cid in his last battle, though no flags accompanied him on his journey and no bugles blew for him. Behind him tramped what was left of his battalion, boys turned into veterans, veterans with a score to settle. For the major, thus achieving his purpose, thus carrying out his orders, thus leaving to those who loved him a heritage of pride that will outlast their grief—the major lay in an ambulance, at the head of his command, his face covered, dead.

PRESERVATION COPY

New York Times, July 30, 1944

THOMAS D. HOWIE 'MAJOR OF ST. LO'

Army Reveals the Identity of
Officer Whose Body Was
Taken Into Captured Town

WITH 116TH INFANTRY REGIMENT in France, July 23 (Delayed UP)—They passed out Presidential citations today to officers and doughboys who cracked St. Lo, the eastern hinge of the German battleline, and it was a sad ceremony to many because the "Major of St. Lo" was not alive to receive his.

The "Major of St. Lo" was Thomas D. Howie of Staunton, Va. He was killed July 17, the day before the city fell, after his troops broke through the German wall to relieve another battalion of this regiment that had been encircled on the outskirts.

Today the major lies in honor with other officers and men in the Twenty-ninth Division's cemetery—but on the day St. Lo was taken the dead major was carried through the streets in state in an ambulance and his flag-draped body was placed on a pile of rubble beside the shell-wrecked church of Ste. Croix. The storming force passed in review through an artillery barrage thrown by the withdrawing Germans.

The wiry, muscular officer, a native of Abbeville, S. C., was popular with all ranks in the division from the lowest private to the commanding officer, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt, who personally ordered Major Howie's body taken into St. Lo by the combat force as a gesture honoring him and his battalion. By taking the high ground dominating the approaches to the city, his men sealed its fall.

Gave Up Headquarters Post

"He had given up an operations post at regimental headquarters to take over the battalion only five days before," said Capt. Charles B. Cawthon of Murfreesboro, Tenn., executive officer of the cut-off battalion to whose relief Major Howie and his troops came after they had been almost three days with no fresh rations or ammunition supplies.

Farther down the road was camped Major Howie's battalion, now under command of 25-year-old Capt. William H. Puntenney of Phoenix, Ariz., formerly his executive officer.

Captain Puntenney, a tall, blond former cattle rancher, cleared his voice twice as he told what happened in the battalion command post among the hedgerows.

"We had just finished meeting the company commanders to wind up our attack plans," he said. "They had been dismissed and before they could get back to their companies the Germans began dropping a mortar barrage around our ears."

"Before taking cover in one of two foxholes we were using, Major Howie turned to take a last look to be sure all his men had their heads down," continued Captain Puntenney.

Killed by Mortar Shell

"Without warning one of their mortar shells hit a few yards away and exploded. A fragment struck

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Killed by Mortar Shell

"Without warning one of their mortar shells hit a few yards away and exploded. A fragment struck the major in the back and apparently pierced his lung. 'My God, I am hit,' he murmured, and I saw he was bleeding at the mouth. As he fell I caught him.

"I called a medic, but nothing could be done. He was dead in two minutes. Before we jumped off that morning he had told some division officers: 'See you in St. Lô.' General Gerhardt knew that if he lived he would have wanted to be one of the first in the city—and he saw that he had his wish."

Four battalion headquarters men in an adjoining foxhole were slightly injured by the burst that killed the major, but all insisted on sticking to the job.

The obituary of Major Howie was given by T/4 Clarence Garelik of 1221 Vyse Avenue, the Bronx, who said: "Everyone of us enlisted men looked up to him and admired him as a leader. But at the same time he was so kind and considerate you always felt comfortable around him—even if you were a private and he a major."

Joseph H. Ewing, 29 Let's Go! A History of the
29th Infantry Division in World War II (Infantry Journal
Press, Washington, 1948), 29 LET'S GO!



Tom Howie, as captain

dressed his wound he merely put his cane on his other arm and walked away. Later, however, he was evacuated.

Col. Alfred V. Ednie, who had replaced Colonel Ordway as commander of the 115th this day, held a prominent role in personally directing and dispersing troops and vehicles in St. Lô, and in organizing the city's defense.

As if to stake its claim in the capture of the city, the 29th raised its Divisional colors over St. Lô's heaping ruins while the battle was still in progress. This was in accordance with General Gerhardt's order. At the heavily bombarded main square of the city, dubbed Mortar Corner by task force troops, Col. Edward H. McDaniel, Division chief of staff, gave a Blue-and-Gray flag to S/Sgt. Gerald Davis, of the 115th's 1st Battalion headquarters. Sergeant Davis climbed the second floor of the Café Malherbe and hung the flag from a window, but a German anti-tank shell crashed nearby, and the concussion ripped down the flag. It was hung up a second time, however, and remained untouched.

Action of the task force was for the most part confined to mopping up. There was little organized resistance in St. Lô, and although enemy artillery fire was heavy, little disorganized groups were giving

up all over the city. By 5:30 P.M. all troops and tanks were in position and all organized resistance had been overcome.

The fall of St. Lô, ranking in strategical importance with that of Cherbourg, was reported by General Gerhardt to Maj. Gen. Charles H. Corlett, XIX Corps commander in a formal and proud announcement:

I have the honor to announce to the Corps Commander that Task Force C of the 29th Division has secured the city of St. Lô after forty-three days of continual combat from the beaches to St. Lô. 29 Let's Go!

Offensive action east of St. Lô on July 18 was confined to the other two battalions of the 115th, since both the 116th and 175th remained in defensive positions. The 2d Battalion, resuming its attack after its sudden advance of the previous evening, headed southwest from la Planche toward Haras, a suburb of St. Lô. It was stopped after approximately seven hundred yards by heavy machine-gun and mortar fire, and shortly thereafter was ordered to change direction and advance due south to Ste. Croix-de-St. Lô. The battalion secured this objective by 7:00 P.M., cutting the eastern highway exit of the city.

The 3d Battalion moved southwest from the Martinville Ridge toward the highway, and by 4:00 in the afternoon I Company had reached the race track on the eastern edge of St. Lô.

While the men of 115th's K and L Companies, deployed along the hedgerows off the St. Lô-Bayeux road, were eating their supper of C rations, a group of approximately thirty German paratroopers was observed walking down the highway toward St. Lô, apparently unaware of the presence of the American troops. In a sudden quickening of activity within the hedgerows, a heavy .30 caliber machine gun was put in position and laid to cover the road. Then T/Sgt. Ambers Glidewell, a section leader of M Company, together with a German speaking member of K Company, hurried up to the hedge and called on the paratroopers to give up without a fight. Someone who appeared to be the leader of the group shouted back: "Surrender—no! *You* surrender! We have you *surrounded!*" As he said this he sent a burst of fire from his machine pistol at Sergeant Glidewell, narrowly missing him. Immediately the heavy machine gun opened up with long bursts of fire that left approximately a third of the group casualties, while the remainder darted off the road and disappeared in the hedgerows.

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During the night of July 18, and the following day, the enemy made repeated but futile counterthrusts at St. Lô, and kept his harassing artillery on the city. The heavy shelling disrupted all wire communication, and as radios linked to the rear infantry CPs were not working, contact with the rear was by courier. T/5 Ernest L. Martin, a CP messenger, was kept running the gantlet of the Isigny Road to keep communication with the Division headquarters in the Bois de Bretel.

During the morning of July 19, when the 1st Battalion was with absolutely no wire or radio communication to the rear, a large concentration of German infantry was reported moving toward the southwest section of the city. But there was no prospect of artillery support with the radios out. Then, at almost the same moment that this report was made, Pfc. John C. Henderson, switchboard operator at the Battalion CP, called to Major Johns: "Major, the wiremen say they found a wire to the rear, and they're going to splice us in. They don't know where it goes. Is it OK?"

"Hell yes," the major said. Then Henderson was calling the unknown party at the other end of the wire: "Hello, this is Lagoon Red, who are you? . . . Angel? Who's Angel? . . . You say you're artillery! . . . 155s! . . . Say Major! They're 155s!"

Thus, in this caprice of chance, in this finding of a loose, broken wire, the necessary artillery support was made available to repel what could have developed into a serious counterattack against St. Lô. Angel (the code name for the 967th Field Artillery Battalion) had no direct contact with Lagoon Red before or since that day, but it is remembered in the 1st Battalion as St. Lô's temporary guardian, heaven sent, at a time of great uncertainty.

THE MAJOR OF ST. LÔ

About 7:30 A.M. on July 19 in the city's main square, by the Church of Notre Dame, a coffin draped with an American flag was carried to the top of a pile of stone from the church's shattered wall and placed there reverently by a soldier detail. In the coffin lay the body of Major Howie, who had died back on the Martinville Ridge the day before the city fell.

The morning of his death, before the battalion had set out on its silent dawn attack that carried it forward to contact with the isolated 2d Battalion at la Madeleine, Major Howie had taken his leave of some officers with the casual remark, "See you in St. Lô!"



The body of Major Tom Howie, draped with flag, lies in state in the St. Lô square

Although it had been a casual remark it had sprung from a soldier's heart that had waited in long anticipation of the great day when the city would fall, when the campaign would be over, when the Division would come out of the line. The longing of every soldier in the St. Lô hedgerows was reflected in this carefree parting salutation, for every soldier knew that St. Lô was the objective.

"See you in St. Lô" was an aggressive, fighting way to say "so long," and when Major Howie died General Gerhardt determined that the pledge implied in the major's words would be fulfilled. As the armored column of Task Force C swept into St. Lô, Major Howie rode with it. An ambulance bore his body into the city, where it now lay in state. The story of this incident, which was to become one of the dramatic classics of the war, was seized upon by war correspondents and reported in the press throughout America. Because of the restrictions of censor-

ship at that time Major Howie's name was withheld, and he became simply "The Major of St. Lô."

The New York Times, in an editorial on the fall of St. Lô concluded:

That same evening the unnamed major rode into St. Lô. He rode in state, with armored cars acting as his guard of honor. He rode like the Cid in his last battle, though no flags accompanied him on his journey and no bugles blew for him. Behind him tramped what was left of his battalion, boys turned into veterans, veterans with a score to settle. For the major, thus achieving his purpose, thus carrying out his orders, thus leaving to those who loved him a heritage of pride that will outlast their grief—the Major lay in an ambulance at the head of his command, his face covered, dead.

The fact that Major Howie's battalion did not follow behind the column in which their commander rode detracted in no way from the editorial tribute, just as the line in the poem which told of the major's death by sniper fire did not lessen the nobility of its tone. Widely read by the men of the Division was Joseph Auslander's measured eulogy, "Incident at St. Lô," which first appeared in *Life*. It immortalized the battle in which they fought, and raised its story to poetic level:

They rode him propped straight and proud and tall
Through St. Lô's gates. . . . He told the lads he led
That they would be the first at St. Lô's fall—
But that was yesterday . . . and he was dead;
Some sniper put a bullet through his head,
And he slumped in a meadow near a wall;
And there was nothing further to be said;
Nothing to say, nothing to say at all.

Ride soldier in your dusty, dizzy jeep,
Grandier than Caesar's chariot, O ride
Into the town they took for you to keep,
Dead captain of their glory and their pride!
Ride through our hearts forever, through our tears,
More splendid than the hero hedged with spears!

The Division remained in position on July 19, withdrawing the 116th from the line in the morning, its sector being taken over by the 115th's 2d Battalion. Patrols of the 113th Cavalry Squadron probed the southern exit roads of St. Lô during the day to discover that the enemy had made but a limited withdrawal. On high ground one thousand yards south of the town the Germans were firmly en-

trenched ready to defend the observation they held over the city.

The enemy continued to place heavy artillery fire on St. Lô throughout the day, dropping the most intense concentrations in the morning between 9:30 and 10:00. The 1st Battalion CP, which had set up in a store near the main crossroads, was forced to move because of the heavy shelling. The new location of the CP was a large stone mausoleum in a cemetery in the northeast section of the town, where a large stone covering of a coffin was put into use as a map table.

During the night of July 19 enemy action developed south of St. Lô but it was repulsed with small-arms, and well directed artillery fire of the 110th. A platoon of 115th's K Company, which had been ordered into St. Lô as a reserve unit, during the counterattack, was strung out along one of the city's streets when five German planes flew over the city shortly after 11:00 P.M. A stick of bombs fell into the column, resulting in heavy loss to the platoon in dead and wounded.

However, relief of the Division was in prospect. The 35th Division, which had fought through the St. Lô campaign on the 29th's right flank, commenced moving across the Vire River to take over all Blue-and-Gray positions. By 9:15 A.M. of July 20 the relief of the 175th and the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 115th had been completed and by 5:20 P.M. the 2d Battalion of the 115th had come off the line. All relieved battalions moved by foot and motor back to an assembly area in corps reserve, south of St. Clair-sur-l'Elle, into which the 116th had already closed. However the four battalions of the 29th Division's artillery remained in place and were attached to the 35th Division, not to be relieved until the evening of July 27 when it rejoined the 29th on the Division's return to the front.

This relief marked the first time in forty-five days that the 29th as a division had been out of contact with the enemy. Since the Omaha Beach landings the Blue-and-Gray had been in front every day of the long six-week campaign. Its toll of more than seven thousand killed and wounded clearly bespeaks the bitterness of the struggle, and establishes the Battle for St. Lô as the most costly engagement in the history of the Division.

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Meindl's request for part of the 275th Division, which had just arrived from Brittany and was in the Seventh Army reserve behind *Panzer Lehr*. The 352d Division, which had tried to hold the Vire bridges by fighting in St. Lô with too few men, mounted a counterattack but was too weak to expel the Americans. Hausser and Meindl both later blamed an announcement by the Wehrmacht on the afternoon of 18 July of the withdrawal as the stimulus that had caused the final American assault. Actually, however, they had been unable to secure additional troops and they had feared that U.S. forces west of the Vire would outflank St. Lô from the west; both commanders in reality had been forced by American pressure to pull the *II Parachute Corps* back.⁶¹

To maintain contact and determine the extent of the withdrawal, General Corlett instructed the 113th Cavalry Group to pass through the city. The cavalry received such a volume of anti-tank, mortar, and artillery fire 500 yards south of St. Lô that it became evident at once that the Germans had retired only to the high ground less than a mile to the south. The 352d Division counterattack launched that evening confirmed the fact that the enemy had not gone far.⁶²

The XIX Corps completed its task

on the morning of 19 July. The 29th Division finished clearing the city, and the 35th Division reported no active enemy troops in its sector.⁶³

In capturing St. Lô the divisions had sustained the high losses that had become typical of the battle of the hedgerows. The 35th Division lost over 2,000 men; the 29th Division suffered over 3,000 casualties. On 19 July, in compliance with corps instructions, the 35th Division relieved the 29th, and General Baade deployed his troops across the entire corps front from the Vire River east to the Couvains-Calvaire road.

By the time the men of the 29th Division marched out of St. Lô on 20 July, the body of Major Howie had become a symbol. Task Force C had carried the flag-draped corpse as a battle standard into town on a jeep.⁶⁴ Placed on a pile of rubble before the rather plain Romanesque church of Ste. Croix and surrounded by empty, gaping houses, the body had become a shrine, a universal symbol of sacrifice. When the men of the division removed the body and departed the town, the symbol remained in St. Lô. St. Lô itself, disfigured and lifeless, had become a memorial to all who had suffered and died in the battle of the hedgerows.

⁶¹ Telecon, Hausser to Pemsell, 1950, 18 Jul, *Seventh Army Tel Msgs*; *Seventh Army KTB* (Draft) and Tel Msgs, 17 and 18 Jul; Hodgson, R-54.

⁶² XIX Corps Memo, 19 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl and File.

⁶³ 35th Div Msg, 1019, 19 Jul, XIX Corps G-3 Jnl; Huston, *Biography of A Battalion*, pp. 23-46.

⁶⁴ A legend had also been born. In 1953 a roadside sign in St. Lô read: "... This martyred city [was] liberated the 26th [sic] of July 1944 by Major Howie, killed at the head of his troops. ..."

The American

The First Army to an end on 19 capture of St. Lô. the operations had the southern ed swampland—along St. Lô—Caumont disappointing.

Heroic exertion face, to have acco twelve divisions, t enteen days had seven miles in th Vire and little mo tance east of the the distance gain newly established was less than sa Corps physically o nor Périers; the V ally possess the P and the city of St enemy artillery an than a week after i Corps.¹

To reach positi Caumont line, the tained approxima

¹ The XIX Corps civ not become operationa and only then did the tion begin again to f Jul.

*Martin Blumenson, Breakout and Pursuit
(GPO, Washington, 1961).*

166

BREAKOUT AND PURSUIT

to the slow costly pattern of yard-by-yard advances already so familiar.

There was little improvement on 16 July. While the 35th Division fought to retain Hill 122, the 29th Division seemed virtually paralyzed. The 115th Infantry advanced about 300 yards down the Isigny-St. Lô highway and came abreast of the 35th Division forces on Hill 122, but the regiments on the Martinville ridge could not relieve the isolated battalion.

Six days of fighting had brought the 29th close to its goal, but with considerably weakened forces. Two days earlier, 125 replacements had restored one battalion of the 116th Infantry to only 60 percent of its authorized strength; during the night of 16-17 July another battalion received 250 enlisted replacements, bringing its total strength to 420. On 16 July a battalion of the 115th had only a platoon of riflemen remaining in each rifle company. On 17 July 200 men comprised the three rifle companies of a battalion of the 175th, and most of the commissioned and non-commissioned officers had been killed or wounded. Although these were extreme cases, the other infantry battalions were also seriously depleted.⁴⁴

For the final assault on St. Lô at the opportune moment, General Gerhardt turned to the supporting arms. He instructed Brig. Gen. Norman D. Cota, the assistant division commander, to form a task force of tank, reconnaissance, tank destroyer, and engineer troops. They were to be assembled in the division rear area at a location that would enable them to attack toward St. Lô from either

⁴⁴ 29th Div G-3 Jnl, 1335, 16 Jul, and 1256, 17 Jul.

the northeast—by way of the Isigny-St. Lô highway—or the east—down the Martinville ridge. Because Hill 122 was not yet entirely secure, General Gerhardt still expected to make his climactic drive into St. Lô from the east, but he wanted to be ready to drive from the northeast should capture of Hill 122 prove in reality to be the decisive factor in the battle for St. Lô.



A Legend is Born

On 17 July, the seventh day of attack, the 29th Division struck before dawn. Maj. Thomas D. Howie, commanding the 3d Battalion, 116th Infantry, led his men in a column of companies in a silent march toward Major Bingham's isolated unit. Suspicious Germans increased their artillery and mortar fire and played grazing machine gun fire across the slope of the Martinville ridge. Howie's men resisted the impulse to return this fire and crept forward through an early morning mist, still undetected. Several hours after daybreak, they reached Bingham's isolated force.

The regimental commander, Colonel Dwyer, had hoped that the two battalions together would be able to enter the city, but Bingham's men were exhausted. Howie informed Dwyer by telephone that they were incapable of further effort. When Dwyer asked whether Howie could move his battalion alone to the eastern edge of town, Howie replied, "Will do." Several minutes later an enemy shell killed him.

Taking command of Howie's battalion, Capt. William H. Puntenny tried to mount the attack on St. Lô along the Bérigny highway, but the Germans

THE BATTLE

threw up such a fire that the men through the day an advance. Le counterattack wit from St. Lô to e Puntenny force. presence of An saved the day. V and bombed the division artillery screen of fire positions.⁴⁵ Dis withdrew their two American ba

All efforts of Infantry, to ope and Puntenny o forward ammun. supplies failed. destroyers, esco caliber machine roads about Ma debris, dead ho man vehicles tha tinuing enemy sible. The 17 tempted to rea attacking down but the regimer and made little lief was that br the division arti ficient blood p men.

On the night party of about talion, 116th l the isolated un 18 July, a rif

⁴⁵ [Lt. Col. Robe April to Novembe (Maxwell Air Force 1945), p. 118.



INFANTRYMEN HIT THE GROUND ON A STREET IN ST. LÔ

Ednie, who had come from the 30th Division to understudy the assistant division commander, took his place. Ednie's mission was to open the northeast entrance to the city for the passage of General Cota's task force. Unaware of the German withdrawal, General Gerhardt was cautious. "We may go into St. Lô," he informed the corps commander, "but we don't want anyone to get cut off in there."⁵⁴

After an artillery preparation, the 115th Infantry attacked. Since Hill 122 was no longer a point of embarrassment, the regiment made good progress. At noon Colonel Ednie was hammering on

the gate. "I believe this is the time to alert that Task Force," he advised General Gerhardt. The division commander no longer doubted. "Everything's shaping up now," he informed General Cota, "so I think you'd better get moving."⁵⁵

Forty minutes later General Gerhardt transmitted another order to General Cota. He wanted the body of Major Howie to accompany the first U.S. troops into town.⁵⁶ The act was to be not only a gesture of honor and respect to the fallen but also a visible reminder to the members of the task force of all their comrades who had given their lives in a



task not yet complete. Major Howie's body, apt, for Howie, who of a battalion only death, represented courage and sacrifice. The triumph belonged well as to the living. Howie the fallen was the culmination of

At 1500, 18 July, Force C departed the division left flank, the Isigny-St. Lô halfback making right end, the task

⁵⁴ 29th Div G-3 Jnl, 0725 and 0901, 18 Jul.

⁵⁵ 29th Div G-3 Jnl, 1147 and 1149, 18 Jul.

⁵⁶ 29th Div G-3 Jnl, 1236, 18 Jul.



RUINS OF ST. LÔ

task not yet completed. The choice of Major Howie's body was particularly apt, for Howie, who had taken command of a battalion only three days before his death, represented the qualities of courage and sacrifice that had made the drive to the gates of St. Lô possible. The triumph belonged to the dead as well as to the living, and through Major Howie the fallen were to participate in the culmination of the effort.

At 1500, 18 July, General Cota's Task Force C departed its assembly area near the division left boundary, crossed the division zone, and began to roll down the Isigny-St. Lô highway. Like a left halfback making a wide run around right end, the task force picked up its

interference as it approached the line of scrimmage—the 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, which was closest to the goal. Silencing an antitank gun just outside the town, passing through harassing artillery and scattered rifle fire, and breaking through a roadblock, the task force entered the northeast portion of St. Lô at 1800 of the eighth day of the battle. Quickly seizing a square near the cemetery and organizing it as a base of operations, Task Force C moved rapidly through the rubble-choked streets to points of importance. Small groups occupied key road junctions, squares, and bridges. One hour after the task force entered the town it was apparent that only scattered German

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO:

Ben C. H.

FROM:

MICHAEL K. DEAVER
Assistant to the President
Deputy Chief of Staff

☒ Information

☐ Action

Peggy

Tony

Kim W

Julie

SID CORNELL
P. O. Box 9
San Diego, CA 92112
(619) 295-0115

May 18, 1984

Mr. Michael K. Deaver
Deputy Chief of Staff
The White House
Washington, DC 20515

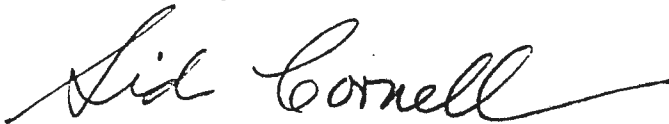
Subject: D-Day Commemoration, June 5, 1984

Dear Mr. Deaver:

I am writing to you at the personal suggestion of some loyal San Diego Republicans. Since time is of the essence in this instance, the enclosed material could be helpful to the President's message on the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of D-Day on June 5, 1984.

The attached letter speaks for itself and all 36 million people killed as a consequence of World War II. It also speaks for all of us including future generations.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sid Cornell". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long, sweeping underline.

Sid Cornell

Enclosure

SID CORNELL
P. O. Box 9
San Diego, CA 92112
(619) 295-0115

May 18, 1984

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

D-Day 40th Anniversary June 5, 1984

Allow me to present a review of events meaningful on this occasion. Why are we commemorating it?

"Lest we forget" — the lives of 36 million victims of World War II and the hope to avoid World War III.

"History gives you a general feeling for the past,
an awareness of the present, and
an inspiration for the future."

Let us look hopefully to our future on this occasion with the courage of those who landed on the Normandy beaches June 5, 1944.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sid Cornell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Sid Cornell
Founding Chairman
San Diego Historical Society
Institute of History

D-DAY 40TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION JUNE 5, 1984

World War II cost 36 million lives.

WORLD BLUNDER #1 - How did it start!

- . August 25, 1939, the Nazis and the Russians signed a mutual aid pact.
- . September 1, 1939, the Nazis and the Russians invade and conquer Poland within a month.
- . September 3, 1939, Britain and other allies declare war on Germany and Russia.
- . June 22, 1941, the Nazis invade Russia and push them back to the gates of Moscow.
- . March 1942, Foreign Minister Molotov flies to Washington to plead for help and supplies.

America responded, under Lend Lease. The allied merchant marine undertook to deliver these supplies. Our men and ships were risked on the run to Murmansk, passing through the Nazi U-boat blockade and the severe cold weather torpedoings. Russia was saved!

The Russians then began to advance west towards Nazi Germany. At the same period, allied troops landed on the Normandy beachheads on June 5, 1944 and advanced eastward towards Nazi Germany. On May 7, 1945, victory in Europe came about and became known as VE Day.

WORLD BLUNDER #2. The Russian people were commemorating VE Day 1984. That same day, their government announced that they were quitting the 1984 Olympic Games. Why? Let us remember the axiom - "Winners never quit, quitters never win." They and their satellites by this action lose the opportunity to show the spirit of togetherness and competition in the world of sports.

WORLD BLUNDER #3. The final blunder will obliterate all of us and our children forever. Sometime ago, Alfred North Whitehead said, "A controversy is not necessarily a disaster, it can be an opportunity." The world is waiting for the opportunity to resolve this controversy with words, not bombs. Let's speak up together, in commemoration of D-Day June 5, 1984, for the memory of the 36 million victims of World War II. Some were my family, my friends, and my comrades -- all were human beings!

Sid Cornell

Founding Chairman
Annual Institute of History
San Diego Historical Society

P. O. Box 9
San Diego, CA 92112
(619) 295-0115

Unclass

CLASSIFICATION

CIRCLE ONE BELOW

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PAGES 5

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DTG 181940Z May 84

ROUTINE

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FROM/LOCATION/

1. C. Henze

TO/LOCATION/TIME OF RECEIPT

1. AMB Rewtschler

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INFORMATION ADDRESSEES/LOCATION/TIME OF RECEIPT

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SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/REMARKS:

84 MAY 18 P 3: 48

WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

Unclass

CLASSIFICATION

Counselor



FOR: AMBASSADOR RENTSCHLER

FROM: CHRISTOPHER HENZE--USIA

**SUBJ: ATTACHED--DRAFT REMARKS FOR FRENCH
TV ON D-DAY**

1. Attached please find subject draft
to be delivered to AMBASSADOR RENTSCHLER,
ROOM 389, TELEPHONE: 395-4614.

If there are any problems please call
Chris Henze, 485-8618. Thank you.

①

Draft Remarks for French TV on D-Day

While contemplating what I could say today to honor those thousands of brave men who gave their lives in the largest landing of troops from the sea in the history of warfare, I recalled the words of another American President on another battlefield whose name will echo forever in American memory.

"The world will little note nor long remember what we say here", said Abraham Lincoln on the field at Gettysburg in 1863, "but it can never forget what they did here."

*Possible
excision
C.H. 5/21*

And so it is today. There is no escaping the obligation which those heroic men created—again in Lincoln's words: "...that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain...and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

The troops who fought their way ashore forty years ago today were the signal of an American commitment to the freedom and security of Europe which endures to this day. That commitment will endure as long as it is needed. The presence of more than three hundred thousand American troops on European soil today testifies to that commitment.

The priceless legacy of those brave men—the dead and the living—has been two generations of peace and prosperity in Europe. Try to think of a comparable period in modern history. The preservation of that legacy has been assured by the continuing

cooperation of that grand coalition of men and nations which made possible the ultimate victory in that great war.

Abraham Lincoln believed, although he did not live to implement that belief, in the necessity of reconciliation with former adversaries. The wisdom of that policy has been amply demonstrated both in Europe and in the Pacific where adversaries have become friends and allies.

Your country and mine are members of an Atlantic Alliance whose founding document contains a pledge that the military forces created under its auspices will never be used except in defense of the territories of its members. But we have not forgotten an important lesson of the second World War—a war which must one day be known as the "last" world war. Temporizing with tyranny can be a very costly business. That cost is measured, not in the tattered reputations of politicians and statesmen, but in the precious lives of their countrymen.

Neither should we forget that on that day forty years ago, thousands of kilometers to the East, some were dying of the twenty million Soviet people who gave their lives in an heroic defense of their homeland. Would that the memory of those Soviet citizens, who gave their last full measure of devotion, could be honored—in this year of remembrance—by a return to the bargaining tables in Geneva.

In those discussions, which unfortunately have been unnecessarily interrupted for a number of months, we are committed to an honest attempt to reduce, together with the Soviet leaders, the levels of nuclear weapons—and thus, the risk of a catastrophic war. We have

5 Peter Sommer

offered, and continue to offer, a negotiation at the conclusion of which--if we cannot yet exchange a handshake of friendship--we can at least signal mutual respect for the vital interests of both sides.

Each year thousands of American veterans return to the Normandy shores to revisit the scene of that momentous day. Many thousands of them have returned today. Many hundreds of them are, tonight, guests in the homes of French families who also remember that day. On their behalf, and on mine, I thank you for your gracious hospitality.

One of the great heroes of American history is a Frenchman. That my countrymen and I continue to revere and honor his memory is made plain by the scores of towns and streets and squares in America which bear his name. A beautiful park upon which I look out each day--directly across the street from my house in Washington--is named in honor of the Marquis Marie Joseph de Lafayette, who served as a General in the American Revolutionary Army. Valuable as his military contribution was, perhaps even more important to the more than two centuries of friendship and alliance between your country and mine was another act somewhat less well known in America.

On 11 July 1789, as a Deputy in the French National Assembly, Lafayette introduced a bill calling for the passage of a declaration of the rights of man. Formally adopted by the Assembly five weeks later, it appeared as the preamble to the French Constitution of 1791.

The congruence of philosophy and commitment between the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights has provided the bed-rock on which

our long friendship and alliance was founded and has been sustained. Those documents proclaim that all men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights. That among these rights are Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness. These historic documents also charge governments with the obligation to govern only with the informed and continuing consent of the governed.

Properly understood, these theses have the potential to attain the universal assent of all mankind. The vitality and continuing validity of these concepts is demonstrated every day in the free nations of the world. Our joint commitment to these ideals has endured and will endure.

Wang #4384G

drafted by: USIA/PG/JSandstrom JS

cleared: STATE/EUR/JHKelly JHK

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MEMORANDUM

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file

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 28, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR RICHARD DARMAN

FROM: ROBERT M. KIMMITT ^{Boh}

SUBJECT: President's Draft Speech for Omaha Beach Ceremonies

Attached at Tab A is a revised version of the draft Presidential remarks to be delivered at Omaha Beach. The attached draft, written by State and NSC, refocuses the speech-writer's draft -- which concentrated heavily on one personal experience -- toward a broad tribute to the sacrifices of the American and Allied soldiers. It also draws attention to the role of French Resistance which is important given the fact that President Mitterrand will attend the ceremonies with the President.

Attachment
Tab A - Draft Speech

cc: Ben Elliott

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests:

I come before you today as President of a country which has buried many of its war dead in foreign soil. I look out on the crosses and stars-of-David bearing names familiar to every American and feel an overwhelming sense of awe for the supreme sacrifice these men have made. From all parts of the American nation these men came to a foreign land to face a powerful foe. They died to free Europe, knowing at the same time that they were fighting to keep America free.

We stand today at a place of battle, one that 40 years ago saw the worst of war. Men bled and died here for a few feet or inches of sand as bullets and shellfire cut through their ranks. About them, General Omar Bradley later said: "Every man who set foot on Omaha Beach that day was a hero."

Words do not do them justice. Speeches cannot portray their suffering, their sacrifice, their heroism. President Lincoln once reminded us that -- through their deeds -- the dead of battle have spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, that we can only honor them by rededicating ourselves to the cause for which they gave a last full measure of devotion.

Today we do rededicate ourselves to that cause. And in this place of honor, we are humbled by the realization of how much so many have given to the cause of freedom and to their fellowman. One such hero, Private First Class Peter Robert Zanatta of the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion, was one of the first to hit Omaha Beach.

"Someday I'll go back and I'll see it all again," he promised his daughter Lisa, "I'll see the beach, the barricades, and the graves. I'll put a flower on the graves of the guys I knew and on the grave of the unknown soldier -- all the guys I fought with."

Lisa Zanatta Henn recounted these words in an essay about her father who bravely fought, and ultimately succumbed to, a battle with cancer eight years ago. "So many men died," she wrote, "I know that my father watched many of his friends be killed. I know that he must have died inside a little each time. But his explanation to me was 'you did what you had to do and you kept on going.'"

Lisa is here today, fulfilling a promise made to her father that she would go in his place and see the graves and the flowers and the ceremonies honoring the veterans of D-Day. "I will never forget what you went through, Dad," she concluded, "nor will I let anyone else forget -- and Dad, I'll always be proud."

x5076

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Jony

5/28/84

Ben Elliott:

Jack Marsh wants
very much to have the 29th
Division mentioned in the Omaha
Beach remarks (see attached
package). Would it be possible
to include a brief reference?
The George Washington connection
is interesting.

Thanks -

Bob Kinnitt



~~SECRET~~

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON

84 MAY 26 P 5:14 24 May 1984

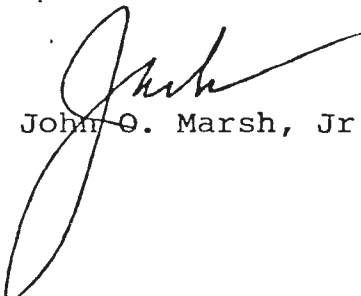
MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Proposed Input for Presidential Speech,
D-Day Ceremonies, Normandy, France --
ACTION MEMORANDUM

Request your assistance in transmitting the attached information to the White House for possible inclusion in President Reagan's D-Day commemoration remarks. Proposed remarks are at Tab G of the enclosure.

Inclusion in the President's speech will help focus national attention on the important role of the Army National Guard, in particular, and the Total Army as a whole. It is important to note that the proposed remarks announce the formation of an additional infantry division in the National Guard.

Thank you for your assistance in this effort.


John O. Marsh, Jr.

Enclosure

DECLASSIFIED

NLS F00-154#5

BY LOT NARA, DATE 7/10/06

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED WHEN SEPARATED
FROM CLASSIFIED INCLOSURES

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TAB G

Possible Presidential Remarks at Omaha Beach

Even before dawn on June 6, 1944, two of America's most distinguished fighting units, the famous 1st Infantry Division (The Big Red One) and the 29th Blue and Gray Division, a National Guard division from Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, assaulted these beaches. The 116th Infantry Regiment, once commanded by our nation's most distinguished soldier, George Washington, landed in the first wave on Omaha Beach. These heroic Virginians debarked that morning from the USS Thomas Jefferson, named after another distinguished Virginian. I am pleased to announce that the Department of the Army will reorganize, within the National Guard of Maryland and Virginia, the 29th Infantry Division whose colors have been folded since 1968.

DECLASSIFIED

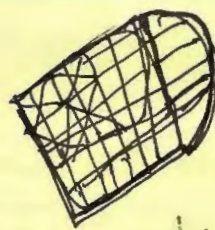
NLS F00-154#6

BY LS, NARA, DATE 7/14/06

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~~CLOSE HOLD~~

No muddy
notes



Slanti Wall
Beach of Blood
9,000

midday - but the
hill - this hill
won't be victory,
tide is turning,
a bloodless victory,
& victory of the
spirit.

"I give unto them
eternal life and
they shall never
perish"

They thought so
that other right
list - peace & freedom
let us take
this life

open heart,
steep bluff
embattled shore
famous harbors
by the river
the valor
the song.

their great
He permit
victor's sword
of their heart devotion
denatured
this submer
in the
common man of humanity.

they deaths gave the
gift of life --
the life of freedom,
that the killing
Thinks not of their
passing, remembrance the
glory of their spirit.

Known but to God,
end of the beginning

The "A great crusade"
an American
general 82nd
I will not find there or there

what they suffered, brutal
weighed down, sea-sick,
wading through ~~stagnant~~ storm
ridges south,

every man was hero
let's move inland and get
murders
Plame Thomas, being rescued, dying
men,

alliance led to
U IV
Marshall Plan, NATO, Commu
mure

Boy - became veterans
on the beach, life
armed to death, days
known victims, and
return home heroes

watched
running

There are death here
and horror -- ~~not~~
works.

But we try, we try
because we are the living,
let us not then
delude ourselves.

~~Kezari~~

Quaker Beach

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