D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II Study Guide

D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II by Stephen Ambrose

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

The story of the planning and execution of the "Climactic Battle of World War II" is told from the viewpoint, and often in the words of, ordinary GIs and Tommies, who fight it. The story opens in January 1944, and closes at dark on D-Day itself, optimistic that a good beginning has been made towards liberating Europe from the Germans.

The Germans on D-Day have all the advantages and disadvantages of defenders everywhere. Their biggest liability is a rigid command structure that assumes the invasion will not occur in Normandy. The attackers, meanwhile, are mobile and backed by a resurrected-American industry that gives them in abundance every weapon they need. Only landing craft are in limited supply. The Commanders: Eisenhower, for the allies and Rommel, for the Germans, are alike in many ways, but Eisenhower is free to command as he sees fit, while Rommel is challenged from above and below. Eisenhower decides where and when to strike and then leaves it to the chain of command to figure out how best to use assets and flesh out intricate plans. The Allies train intensively, while the Germans build static fortifications. By the end of training, the troops are anxious to get into action, but lose some of their enthusiasm (along with their breakfasts) on the aircrafts and boats, once Eisenhower makes the agonizing decision to proceed, despite marginal weather conditions.

Paratroopers and glider troops drop into France overnight, but few land on-target. Most spend the night wandering about, forming *ad hoc* units and heading for the objectives they know must be reached and secured. Before dawn, Allied bombers are supposed to soften up the invasion beaches but generally miss their targets. Naval forces then open their big guns, but do little better to prepare the way for the infantry. Troops are told that craters will abound for their protection, and no one will remain alive on the beach to fire on them. They are surprised when machine guns, mortars and artillery pepper the surf line as they wade ashore.

Every beach has been heavily fortified with a variety of deep-water mines, mined beach obstacles, barbed wire and antitank ditches. Each beach has unique features that both sides seek to exploit to full advantage. Tides and winds cause most landing craft to land off-schedule and off-target and plans have to be rethought on the fly. Utah Beach, where Americans land, enjoys the luxury of being backed by airborne troops, helping to keep the Germans busy inland. Omaha Beach, an another American site, is pure hell and chaos, as rising tides and steep, well-defended bluffs snarl the invaders in a massive traffic jam and leave them sitting ducks. Inland lie dense hedgerows from which machine gunners cut down the GIs. Catastrophe, however, is averted, usually because of individual initiative.

Americans at home turn to prayer as word comes that the invasion has begun. Politicians invoke God's blessing on the "Great Crusade." The British and Canadians use "gadgets" to expedite crossing the beaches and heading inland across flatlands free of hedgerows. Gold Beach, a British landing site, is the best ordered and most easily won, while Juno, where the Canadians seek payback for the national disaster at

Dieppe, resembles the carnage of Omaha, but with more friendly tanks available to hide behind. Sword Beach resembles Gold, but with more street fighting. At dusk on D-Day, only one unit has achieved its overly optimistic pre-invasion objective, but everywhere the Atlantic Wall has been pierced and the *Wehrmacht* has failed to mount a meaningful counterattack. Its strict command structure, like the Atlantic Wall itself, is a complete failure. Mobility, initiative throughout the ranks, unchallenged air and sea power, and unlimited equipment, make the Allied gamble to land in Normandy on June 6, 1944, pay off.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

The story of the planning and execution of the "Climactic Battle of World War II" is told from the viewpoint, and often in the words of, the ordinary GIs and Tommies who fight it. It opens as planning begins in January 1944, and closes at dark on D-Day itself, optimistic that a good beginning has been made towards liberating Europe from the Germans.

"The Defenders" describes how Hitler depends on an "Atlantic Wall," to repel an Allied invasion. Hitler hopes to negotiate a separate peace with Stalin, so he can redeploy the decimated *Wehrmacht* (army) to the West, where the strategic Rhine-Ruhr industrial region is menaced. Once the Allies are thrown back, he can return attention eastward. Hitler's priorities are sound, but Germany lacks the resources for a three-front battle along a combined 11,000-kilometers. Its cities are being carpet bombed, manufacturing losses are growing irreversible and Hitler has vetoed an atom bomb project in favor of raining terror on London by V-1s and V-2s. Too late, he allows defensive use of superior, new ME-262 jets. The *Kriegsmarine* (Navy) is largely reduced to E-boats, useful only for laying mines. The defenders are blind to Allied preparations.

The waste incurred by the Eastern campaign (3 million casualties) forces the *Wehrmacht* to abandon "racial purity" and enlist Slavic "volunteers" in *Ost* ("East") units. One in six riflemen on the Atlantic Wall comes from as far away as Korea and is augmented by elderly and adolescent German draftees. High-quality troops are too few, too immobile, and insufficiently armored for counterattacks. Veterans are dispirited, but efficient when well commanded. The best young recruits, alumni of the Hitler Youth, are sent to crack *Waffen*-SS, paratroop, and armored units, where they receive the finest quality weapons in the world.

The French coastline provides natural defenses, which German engineers strengthen. Hitler orders that a "continuous belt of interlocking fire emanating from bombproof concrete structures" be in place along the Atlantic coast by May 1, 1943. This assumes the Allies enjoy air and naval supremacy. Almost none of the fantasy is completed. To draw the Allied landing to Pas-de-Calais, where his defenses are the strongest, Hitler installs V-1 and V-2 launch sites there. Hitler knows the details of these defenses better than anyone but fails to inspect them.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary and Analysis

"The Attackers" looks at how surprise is on the side of Allied planners. Amphibious operations rarely succeed historically, and Allied attempts on the *unfortified* coastlines of North Africa, Sicily, and Salerno encounter problems. The British are reticent to take the offensive, but the U.S. must begin using the 7.2 million men it has assembled and trained (up from 170,000 in 1940). Unless a second front is launched, Stalin may accept Hitler's proposal or seize Western Europe after the war. The Germans enjoy *strategic* advantages, but the Allies control sea and air and get to choose when and where the battle is joined. Once in France, advantage shifts to Germany, whose fifty infantry and eleven armored divisions initially face at best five Allied divisions. All supplies and reinforcements must cross the Channel. If the *Wehrmacht* can counterattack effectively in the first week, it could prevail. The Germans must be convinced the *real* invasion is just a feint; how the Allies intend to accomplish that is described in Chapter 4. How the attack should proceed is unsettled. The *Wehrmacht* has often outflanked enemies, and frontal attacks in Russia and Italy have been costly and ineffective. The Allies possess the firepower for a World War I-style preparatory barrage, but planners think surprise is more important. The Atlantic Wall cannot be pulverized, and the battle is not for delimited objectives as in the Pacific. High beach casualties are an acceptable risk to prevent heavier ones later inland.

Discharging men and equipment in surf and wet sand hampers agility, and getting them across the Channel presents a significant challenge. In the 1930s, the U.S. Navy is too preoccupied with capital ships to care about small amphibious craft. The British have designed massive Landing Ships, Tank (LSTs) and smaller Landing Craft, Tank (LCTs), which are the workhorses of the Mediterranean landings, but improvements are sought for such shallow-draft boats to enable them to beach, discharge, extract, turn tightly and return quickly. Entrepreneurs and small boat yards, working on speculation, accept the challenge of producing them. The premier designer is Andrew Jackson Higgins of New Orleans, praised by Eisenhower as "the man who won the war for us." The Marines love Higgins' "Eureka" boat, originally intended for oil exploration and designate it "Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel" (LCVP). Higgins Industries produces 20,000 "Higgins boats" that carry ashore more Americans than all other craft combined.

For airborne drops behind enemy lines, the Allies use versatile, dependable, rugged, but slow C-47 "Dakotas". Each of them is carrying a "stick" of eighteen elite, volunteer paratroopers. The U.S. has two airborne divisions, the 82nd and 101st, and the British two, the 1st and 6th. Training is rigorous, unit cohesion strong, and conditioning and motivation superb. The regular infantry is draftees, healthier and better educated than the population at large, but green. The British infantry are less educated and fit than the Americans, better at military rituals, but worse in carrying out orders. They surrender readily and lack a "killer instinct." Their senior officers, cannon fodder during World War

I, are, to Americans' minds, too cautious. Brits see the Yanks as neophytes in need of tutoring. They get on one another's nerves, but must learn to fight together as a team.

Postwar myth falsely turns German soldiers into supermen. Their two-to-one kill ratio (on defense) is impressive, but they always yield to superior firepower. The Germans are also behind technologically. The British excel in practical innovations, including "Ultra," which deciphers the German "Enigma" code and reveals their activities. The British "Double Cross System" feeds accurate, but insignificant or untimely information, from turned *Abwehr* agents to their superiors, encouraging overconfidence. Midge Gillars, a sexy-voiced Ohio girl known as "Axis Sally," infuriates GIs, who fail to realize she mouths what the Double Cross System feeds her. It is oversimplified to say "British brains and American brawn" win the war, but the U.S. economy recovers from stagnation and unemployment to meet President Roosevelt's call for 4,000 aircraft a month in 1942, and doubles that number in 1943. Eisenhower points to "the fury of an aroused democracy" as the key to victory. In fact, it is a triumph of international teamwork.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

"The Commanders" compares and contrasts two men who both hate war's destruction. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Field Marshal Erwin Rommel are born a year apart, come from non-military backgrounds, are athletic and mildly rebellious and competent but not outstanding in studies at military academies. Each marries a beautiful woman and has one son. During World War I, Rommel gains combat experience while Eisenhower masters "logistics and administration" stateside. Each shows leadership ability and inspires loyalty. Each emerges from obscurity when a new war comes. Rommel commands a panzer division in France in 1940, and the entire *Afrika Korps* in 1941-42. Eisenhower first confronts Rommel at Kasserine Pass in 1942. The clash shows Rommel taking risks and maneuvering, and Eisenhower cautiously calculating and overwhelming. The Americans are green but win with superior firepower. Before the "defeatist" Rommel's reputation is spoiled, Hitler recalls him and leaves him idle. Eisenhower, meanwhile, oversees invasions in Sicily and Italy, gaining confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism, and honing skills as a "team player."

In October, *Wehrmacht* chief of operations, General Alfred Jodl, recommends Rommel receive tactical command of the Atlantic Wall under aged Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. They agree the attack will come at Pas-de-Calais but differ on positioning forces for a decisive counterattack. Rommel wants to fight on the beaches while von Rundstedt favors fighting beyond range of Allied naval guns. Neither is a defensively-minded tactician. On Jan. 15, 1944, Hitler gives Rommel command of Army Group B, including the 15th and 7th armies. That same day, Eisenhower takes up "the most coveted command in the war by default." In Teheran, Iran, Stalin refuses to believe a second front will open until a commander is named. Roosevelt favors his chief of staff, George Marshall, but settles for the team player, Eisenhower.

Neither commander is comfortable with the posh headquarters picked out by aides in distracting capital cities and move to the suburbs. Bushy Park is Eisenhower's HQ and La Roche-Guyon Rommel's. Both men take command resolutely, set grueling schedules and sleep little. They differ, however, in attitude, with Rommel being forced to consider all the "provideds" of defense, while Eisenhower refuses to "entertain any doubts." Whereas Rommel's new command is fragmented, with Hitler keeping personal control of the panzers needed to counterattack, Eisenhower enjoys clear-cut command. Eisenhower has worked with most of his team in the Mediterranean, while Rommel hardly knows his senior commanders. Eisenhower does not care for the cautious Gen. Bernard Law Montgomery but accepts the politics of Montgomery playing a prominent role. Air Vice-Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory is also overly cautious. Eisenhower has worked well with and likes Air Marshal Arthur Tedder and Admiral Bertram Ramsay. General Omar N. Bradley is a West Point classmate and trusted friend. Where Eisenhower sees himself a crusader ridding Europe of hated Nazism, Rommel is a professional, who respects his enemy.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

"Where and When?" describes the planning done by British Lt. Gen. Frederick Morgan, chief of staff to the supreme Allied commander (COSSAC), and a mixed staff. Stipulations are it be "full-scale" (three divisions) and "as early as possible." A shortage of landing craft constrains them and makes "concentration of force" mandatory. Memory of Dieppe (see Chapter 29) precludes a frontal attack on a defended port, which leaves COSSAC to consider beaches that can support prolonged offloading and rapid, massive movement inland. Holland and Belgium lie within range of the *Luftwaffe* and are too easily flooded. The Pas-de-Calais coast is ideal, were it not the strong point in German defenses. Brittany's advantages are offset by its distance from Britain. The Cotentin Peninsula lies open to Atlantic storms, is guarded by the German-held Channel Islands, and is easily flooded. By a process of elimination, COSSAC settles on the Calvados coast of Normandy, where the Orne River divides the *Wehrmacht's* 7th and 15th armies, creating a weak spot. It is sheltered from storms and has 30 kilometers of broad sand beaches, which reconnaissance missions confirm can bear the weight of armored vehicles.

Eisenhower's team accepts Morgan's logic but expands the front to five divisions, landing, east to west in this order: U.S. 4th Infantry Division on Cotentin (Utah Beach); U.S. 29th and 1st Infantry on Calvados (Omaha); British/Canadians west of the Orne (Sword, Juno, and Gold). The British 6th Airborne protects the left flank between the Orne and Dives rivers. Logistics demand use of just one army, American or British, but politics demand both participate. A major, pre-invasion goal, is convincing the Germans that this is a feint, and Pas-de-Calais the real objective, so they concentrate their tanks there, beyond the vulnerable Seine and Somme bridges.

"Operation Fortitude" is the Allies' elaborate plan for convincing Hitler that Overlord is a feint and twice as powerful as it actually is. The Germans are masters of radio deception, but the Double Cross System has prepared them to accept spy data as authentic and accurate. "Fortitude North," which leaks hints of action against U-boat bases in Norway, draws thirteen army divisions away from France, while the far larger and more elaborate "Fortitude South" plants fake evidence in Dover, directly opposite Pas-de-Calais, that the First U.S. Army Group (FUSAG), a patchwork of real and "notational" (imaginary) forces, is the real thing. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, whom the Germans respect, is named FUSAG commander. In May, the Germans believe that the Allies have eighty-nine divisions, not forty-seven, and that they have enough landing craft to bring twenty divisions ashore; whereas, they can barely handle six. To prevent the Germans from learning the truth, Eisenhower badgers Churchill into banning visitors from southern England and removing privilege from diplomatic communications. Ultra intercepts culled weekly to produce a summary of the "German Appreciation of Allied Intentions in the West" show the deception working. Hitler speculates the Allies will try to dupe them but lacks resources to penetrate Fortitude.

COSSAC's second decision is *when* to invade. Foul Atlantic weather and the Red Army's inability to coordinate an offensive earlier than May 1, makes that the first date proposed. Eisenhower moves it into June, so more landing craft can be built. The Navy and Air Force want to operate in daylight, while the Army insists on maximizing surprise. June 5-7, and 19-20, are low tides, offering windows of opportunity. Eisenhower picks June 5. Knowing little about how amphibious operations work, Rommel anticipates movement at high tide, so when nothing occurs in the first or third week of May, he assumes he is safe until June 20. Eisenhower makes no contingency plans if Overlord fails - in that Hitler and Rommel are right.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

"Utilizing Assets" examines the advantage attackers enjoy over defenders, being free to concentrate resources wherever they want. Montgomery and Bradley propose using airborne forces defensively. All agree that throughout D-Day medium and heavy bombers will pulverize coastal defenses, but how to utilize them in the two months prior to the invasion occasions squabbling. Air chiefs Generals Carl Spaatz and Sir Arthur Harris believe bombing alone can bring victory and are loath to interrupt pounding German oil refineries. Opposed to their "Oil Plan" is the "Transportation Plan" calling for a prolonged attack on the railway infrastructure and bridges. Oil Plan advocates believe getting ashore is easy and miss how critical it is to prevent any counterattacks in the first days. Eisenhower turns to Churchill and gains "direction" of the force only after threatening to resign. Churchill passes the buck about targeting to Roosevelt, who accepts the military view that it is "extremely hazardous, if not foolhardy" not to incorporate the Transportation Plan. B-26 Marauder bombers flying at low altitude for accuracy, drop 76,000 tons of bombs on the French railway system, destroying the Seine bridges, and 1,700 locomotives and 25,000 wagons. The Germans recover easily, causing American intelligence to assess the effect as minimal, while German generals call it "ruinous" to counteroffensive plans and bringing up concrete to strengthen the Atlantic Wall.

The French Resistance plays a vital role as well. Poorly armed, uncoordinated and mistrusted by bulk of the don't-rile-the-Germans population, the brave, patriotic Resistance acknowledges Charles de Gaulle in Algiers as its leader but coordinate operations with the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS). They provide war planners accurate information from behind enemy lines, much of it culled from civilians drafted (and maltreated) by the Germans to build the Atlantic Wall. Data on construction, infrastructures, armaments and troop placements are smuggled to the SOE by various, ingenious means, helping naval gunners pinpoint camouflaged bunkers and paratroops to keep vital bridges intact. The Resistance also sabotages railroads in coordination with the Transportation Plan. While the British unrealistically hope for a national uprising, SHAEF settles for the Resistance severing main trunk lines to the invasion beaches *(Plan Vert)* and guerrilla actions on the roads to block troop movements *(Plan Tortue)*. Resistance fighters receive airdropped explosives and hide them where no one will look. Nightly, teenagers in Montauban siphon axle oil from railroad cars destined to carry Tiger tanks to the front and substitute abrasive powder. This makes the panzer unit fourteen days late in arriving at Normandy.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

"Planning and Preparing" examines the Allies' top-down planning. After Eisenhower decides where and when to hit, Bradley and Montgomery outline plans and pass them down through corps, division, regiment and battalion levels. Higher levels resist micromanaging, particularly after the first training rehearsal. Each assault section is allowed to solve the unique problems dictated by beach terrain and Rommel's defenses, which consist of channel mining and successive bands of obstacles set between the high- and low-water marks. Static positions produce killing zones from three directions, guaranteeing that anyone who reaches cover is wounded or paralyzed with fear. Omaha Beach is the most thoroughly defended, thanks to its bluffs. Exit roads are protected against tanks and trucks, and big guns inland can hit the warships. Behind Utah, Rommel floods fields and positions artillery units whose guns are pre-sighted on the "causeways." Thousands of "Rommel's asparagus" - ten-foot logs driven into the ground to gut gliders- are set up in fields. Because of lack of resources, these are the only inland defenses, but hedgerows provide ideal cover for the defenders, as will be seen in later chapters.

Rommel insists that the 2nd Panzer Division dig in on the coast, but the preeminent panzer expert, Gen. Heinz Guderian, says tanks are better used inland, beyond range of naval guns and against overstretched forces. Rommel observes that the Allies enjoy air superiority everywhere. Hitler gives Rommel control of the 2nd, 21st, and 116th divisions and withholds four others under Jodl's command, to be released once Allied intentions are clear. How this invites defeat will be seen in later chapters. Rommel deploys the 2st around Caen and the others, including the premier *Panzer Lehr,* equidistant between Calais and Calvados, too far to reach the beaches quickly. When spring flooding closes the Eastern Front, Hitler transfers units to Rommel, who stations the the 91st and the elite 6th Parachute Regiment commanded by the legendary Col. Frederick von der Heydte in Cotentin. They join the 243rd and 709th and the 352nd, 716th, and 21st Panzer in Calvados.

Meanwhile, the Allies develop plans that they are certain will result in breaching the Atlantic Wall. On Apr. 7, Montgomery briefs general officers on the outline, viz.: at midnight, the British 6th Airborne knocks out the battery at Merville, secures bridges, and protects the flank. The British 3rd, with French and British commandos attached, takes Sword, Caen, and its airfield. The Canadian 3rd takes Juno and cuts the Caen-Bayeux highway. The British 50th at Gold does the same, also seizing Arromanches and Longues-sur-Mer from behind. The U.S. 1st and 29th take Omaha and the nearby villages and push inland. Rangers capture the Pointe-du-Hoc battery. The U.S. 4th Infantry takes Utah, controls the coastal road, and with the 101st Airborne drives into Cherbourg. The 82nd Airborne secures Cotentin against enemy reinforcements. Throughout the briefing, Montgomery assumes that getting ashore poses no problem

and Rommel will counterattack within five days. Protecting and enlarging the lodgment area is thus key.

During April and May, Rommel's forces lay concrete and set asparagus while Allied generals and colonels work on specific plans for getting ashore. Plans call for a heavy Allied air and naval bombardment beginning at midnight and ending at H minus five minutes. DD tanks, self-propelled howitzers, and rocket launchers fire as they come ashore, ahead of the infantry waves. While each regiment and beach has unique plans, those of the 116th on Omaha are typical, covering precisely every movement from four days before D-Day, as ships are boarded and convoys formed up, through the "crescendo of high explosives" intended to rattle defenders so "skirmishers" can make it ashore and take the beach exits. One private who sees the phonebook-thick document says it looks like a train schedule and figures nothing can go wrong. Others, including Eisenhower, believe that once the battle is joined, plans are worthless.

By mid-May, plans are complete at the regimental level, but subject to modification as intelligence dictates. Thus, the 82nd Airborne's drop zone is shifted when the German 91st arrives. Army and Navy debate where on Utah Beach the depth of water is optimal and who should decide when to launch tanks. The Navy wins the first argument and the tankers the latter. On May 15, Montgomery holds a final dress rehearsal attended by King George VI, Churchill, and the "brass." Tension around a huge colored map is "palpable." Eisenhower speaks first, briefly, ordering anyone who sees a flaw in the plan to speak up. Montgomery confidently pats the planners on the back, while finally acknowledging Rommel as an "energetic and determined commander," albeit not at his best on defense. The Allies are sure to blast their way ashore and penetrate inland on D-Day. By 1415 hours, the long-dubious Churchill is tearfully won over. Eisenhower is confident.

Chapter 7 and 8

Chapter 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

"Training" is portrayed as an Allied obsession, for preparing diverse units to get ashore on Normandy is *the* make-or-break part of Overlord. Little thought is given to what they will do inland. After the Kassine Pass in 1943, Eisenhower allows no unit to stop training until the war is won. On learning it is the Americans' vanguard assault unit, the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, shifts from containing blitzkrieg offensives to storming and seizing enemy strong points. They practice techniques at the squad level and work up through company and battalion levels. As training stretches out to two years, men grow impatient.

The 29th Division sails for England in September 1942, and settles near Salisbury, enduring homesickness, terrible weather, horrendous food, marching all over southwestern England, learning to "love the ground," and developing offensive tactics for loading and unloading landing craft, and handling explosives, poison gas, first aid, and booby traps. Assault exercises are as realistic as possible. Juno Beach is recreated in detail in Inverness, Scotland, and at Slapton Sands, the U.S. Assault Training Center displaces 3,000 residents to recreate the Cotentin coastline. Ranges specialize in dealing with hedgehogs, artillery and mortar fire, wire cutting, satchel charges, flamethrowers, rockets, and grenades. Experimentation shows how best to allocate the thirty spaces available on each Higgins boat among the specialties needed ashore. Umpires judge, criticize, and make suggestions as training proceeds through four phases from the individual to battalion. Accidents, some fatal, occur. Surprisingly, no advice is requested from colleagues who have stormed Pacific island beaches. Once the 29th completes the school, it is opened to thousands of troops per week.

Comprehensive, realistic dress rehearsals take place across England in April and early May, helping the Army, Navy, and Air Force get to know one another. During "Operation Tiger" (Apr. 27-28), there are traffic jams and late arrivals and German E-boats slip through to attack some LSTs. Tiger teaches the Allies to incorporate rescue craft, to teach men to use life preservers, and to coordinate radio wavelengths. Except for the U.S. 1st and 82nd, Overlord marks the American forces' "baptism of fire," and the objective of all training is to make them believe that combat can be no worse and to look forward to it. Once the fighting begins, everyone realizes that no amount of training is sufficient. This theme pervades the remainder of the book.

Some units receive highly specialized training. D Company spends six days practicing near Exeter on the exact configuration of river, canal, and bridges they will face at Orne. Glider pilots undergo "Operation Deadstick," releasing from tug planes progressively higher and further from the target and running against a stopwatch, first in daylight, next wearing colored glasses, and finally at night. The U.S. 2nd and 5th Rangers train in Scotland for taking the battery at Pointe-du-Hoc, enduring forced marches, obstacle courses, mountains, cliffs, and a coastline bristling with obstacles similar to that which

Rommel has readied for them. Three brigades of combat engineers - a quarter of the GIs in the invasion - have the most complex jobs—demolishing beach obstacles, clearing beach mines, directing traffic, clearing access roads, penetrating antitank walls, and establishing supply dumps. Orders call for no one to diverge from his task, not even to help the wounded or bury the dead. There are people tasked with doing this. No. 10 Commandos, composed of vengeful volunteers from across Europe, are "trained to the absolute limit." The 1st and 8th troops are Frenchmen and the 3rd European Jews, fluent in German. They must select new names to avoid retributions if captured.

Racism is widespread in the U.S. Army. While Black Americans serving in World War I with French units win praise and medals, those commanded by Southern whites are deemed incapable of combat. A 1937, study by the U.S. Army War College adopts this view officially, relegating most of the 150,000 black GIs in the U.K. to Service of Supply (SOS), unloading ships and driving trucks. Segregation is as rigid as at home, but Eisenhower forbids discrimination. Passes are alternated between racial groups to minimize friction. White GI's, who initiate ninety percent of the violence, complain in censored letters home about integration, white Britons associating with blacks, and fear repercussions at home after the war. Black GIs by contrast are happy with the British and rejoice there is no color line.

Except for the 21st Panzer Division, the Germans lay obstacles rather than conduct training. Rommel advises vigilance, but the "cushy life of occupiers" and boring work make them sloppy. No one fears becoming an Allied POW. Goebbels and Jodl both try to build morale, to little effect. Commanders lie to their troops about how easily they will throw the enemy back into the sea.

"Marshalling and Briefing" examines life among the two million invaders during their month of waiting after completing training. Shipping gathers in the southern demarcation ports. Soldiers arrive by train, bus, truck, and on foot from training areas throughout the U.K. and are marshaled into divisions, corps, and armies. The assembly areas are called "sausages" because of their long, narrow, contained shapes. Camouflage and MP guards keep the sausages secure from *Luftwaffe* eyes and spies. The sausages are packed with equipment - half a million vehicles, artillery, and supplies "in abundance." The troops waterproof everything, using condoms to cover the muzzles of their new M-1s after test firing and zeroing them using "unlimited" ammunition. A new set of clothing, chemically treated against poison gas is extremely uncomfortable. Troops gripe about this but not about the wonderful, abundant food and first-run, non-stop Hollywood movies. One antidote for boredom is sports, softball after football results in too many casualties. Free libraries provide some twenty-two million paperbacks. Large amounts of money change hands in gambling. Liquor is banned, and those who sneak out to local pubs are arrested, but medicinal alcohol somehow never makes it to Normandy. Company commanders march the men along country roads for exercise, relief of boredom, and to instill in them a sense of the immense scope of the undertaking. Tommies' resentment of Yanks sometimes comes out on these marches.

Only a handful of men holding security designation "Bigot" initially knows where and when Overlord will strike, but the circle of knowledge widens as briefings trickle down

the ranks. Everyone has access to details on terrain and the state of the German defenders. Officers are briefed at the regimental level about unit specifics; S-2 (Military Intelligence) briefers talk of "pushover" actions that everyone would like to believe but cannot. Air and sea bombardments will provide craters for excellent cover. Everyone in every unit down to the lowest private is encouraged to study the sand tables, replicas, and aerial photographs to familiarize themselves with objectives. Thousands of hours are spent in discussions. There is "tough-guy talk" aplenty and some "jackasses" who make light of impassioned and patriotic S-2s. Detailed study of the beach defenses sobers the young men. Attendance at Mass grows, and chaplains do "a big business." Some avoid combat by gaining admittance to the hospital, while others shave their heads to acquire a more fearsome look (including the "Mohawk" cut adopted by the 115th). Junior officers and noncoms worry whether they are up to leading their men into action.

One cannot generalize about the 175,000 men awaiting D-Day. Attitude depends largely on age, and Americans seem more anxious to get started than Britons. A British captain writes his wife late in May about all the "little pinpricks" of camp life: drilling, being pushed around and caged. He tells his platoon how their children one day will read of their exploits but draws only "faint smiles." Churchill's "radio rhetoric" is embarrassing. The troops lack the life experience to make them believe in a "new world" or "liberating mission;" they know they face a "charnel house" and want only to get it over with and return to normal life. They are willing to do as ordered. Early in June, the forces proceed to load up, form up, and move out across the Channel. They leave behind everything but weapons, ammunition, gas masks, and photographs. They receive cigarettes and rations onboard ship. Soon they remember the weeks in camp nostalgically.

Strangely, the Germans make no effort to attack the sausages or harbors. Fortitude has confused them but ought not to have paralyzed them. U-boats patrol the Atlantic rather than converging on the armada to cut Overlord off at the root. Calais is due east of Portsmouth, Calvados/Cotentin south, and Brittany southwest, so the Germans can be excused for not guessing where the mobile enemy plans to strike. And dummy assaults on various beaches keep them jumpy. Weekly intelligence assessments show the Germans do not know where the main assault will take place, overestimate its strength, and continue worrying about Norway. The June 3 summary shows the Germans bolstering their numbers by twenty percent, but panzers make no move toward Cotentin. The Allies know what they face, while the Germans can only guess.

Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary and Analysis

"Loading" describes the massive task of emptying the sausages onto the transport vehicles. Thinking about death, soldiers stop joking and playing pranks, and priests are "in their heyday." Anticipation and excitement about getting on with it are stronger than fear. Most men have been together since boot camp and squads and platoons have bonded as families. Only a few have any "patriotic passion;" instead, most worry about letting their buddies down. Some commanders gather their men for a last talk before boarding.

Coast Guard and Navy crews await the troops. Most officers are "ninety-day wonders," in their early twenties and just out of officer training school, while skippers are "old men" in their thirties. The troops have drilled loading so often it is monotonous routine, and many believe this is just another practice - precisely what the commanders want. Some carry double the allocated weight (44 lbs.), and regimental commanders assign the first wave additional mines, satchel charges, ammunition, etc., to carry. Many bring Bibles, unauthorized weapons, and especially cigarettes. Vehicles too are "grossly overloaded." The intricate schedule holds, loading in "last on, first off" order. Ships are so overcrowded men must rotate sleeping. First thing, the soldiers are fed "wonderful" chow before settling into shipboard boredom, gambling, reading, gossiping and listening to the radio. Axis Sally brings groans, and news Rome has fallen brings cheers. Rangers string ropes to continue training. Those riding the open Channel for the first time in LCIs ("a metal box designed by a sadist") suffer seasickness and grow steadily angrier.

Troops receive copies of Eisenhower's order of the day, which talks of the "Great Crusade" on which they are embarked, backed by the hopes and prayers of "liberty-loving people everywhere." The enemy is formidable, but the Allies' courage, devotion, and skill will bring victory. He wishes them good luck and invokes "the blessing of Almighty God" on their "great and noble undertaking." Many GIs preserve their copy for the rest of their lives, some having had comrades sign it before some of them die.

At the airfields, glider troops and paratroopers check out equipment, stow extra cigarettes and grenades, and study models of their targets. They are ready on a moment's notice to board Horsa gliders and C-47s. A Special Air Service (SAS) unit preparing to carry out "Operation Titanic" to deceive the Germans hits a snag when a regimental commander, who has had bad experience with Intelligence in Italy, refuses to assign men. Obtained elsewhere, they drop 500 dummy, self-destructing parachutists, a gramophone playing battle sounds, and a mass of flare guns for use by real paratroopers when they land. French members have the distinction of being the first Allied soldiers to land in France. The SAS's success is shown later in the book.

All is so quiet among the Germans that Rommel hunts stags, shops, and, exuding confidence, heads to Herrlingen for his wife's birthday, en route to Berchtesgaden to beg Hitler for more resources. A secret Gestapo morale report says glibly that the troops are looking forward to the invasion, but the high command fears mass surrenders. On Omaha Beach, the veteran Maj. Gen. Dietrich Kraiss, commanding the 352nd, is unhappy with the disposition of forces: one artillery and two infantry battalions, plus fourteen in reserve twelve miles inland. This is far more than the second-rate troops that Allied intelligence believes are in place. Weather convinces Col. Gen. Dollmann that it is safe to gather regimental commanders in Rennes for a map exercise, and Adm. Krancke cancels regular E-boat patrols. Only one-legged Gen. Erich Marcks is uneasy about the length of coast each division must defend (50 km.). He predicts the British will attend church Sunday and sail Monday towards him, rather than comrades at Calais as his superiors anticipate.

"Decision to Go" looks at the drama on June 4/5, as Eisenhower decides whether the weather is bad enough to postpone the operation with the ships already at sea. Leigh-Mallory remains a naysayer on landing the airborne in Cotentin, but Eisenhower orders him not to infect the troops with his pessimism. Churchill wants to go along on the invasion, but Eisenhower will not accept the risk. Churchill threatens to sign on as a member of HMS *Belfast*, but King George ends the discussion by telling Churchill that if the prime minister goes, so must the king. Eisenhower next briefs de Gaulle, who tops his list of "Worries of a Commander," just ahead of weather. The French president offers critiques that can no longer be incorporated and refuses to back Eisenhower's planned radio speech to the French.

No one expects perfect weather to coincide with optimal tidal conditions, but after three beautiful days, the weather on June 3 deteriorates badly. GIs "curse and swear" - and vomit - aboard LCTs spending a dark night at sea, observing radio silence, thinking of home, praying and worrying about the massive casualties predicted in the first wave. SHAEF receives weather briefings from its Meteorological Committee daily at 0930 and 1600. At the final conference at 0400 on June 4, 28-year old Capt. J. M. Stagg predicts limited visibility next day and can say nothing beyond that. Montgomery wants to go; Tedder and Leigh-Mallory want to postpone; Ramsay worries but will go. Eisenhower cannot commit without air superiority, since Allied ground forces are not "overwhelmingly powerful." At 0600, he orders a postponement until at least June 6. Strict radio silence means the order must reach ships at sea by word of mouth or flag signals. They return in confusion to the harbors. Barrage balloons are sent aloft to keep the *Luftwaffe* from making low-level passes (four do fly over, harmlessly). After misery at sea, soldiers may not step ashore, and the airborne are no happier.

Ramsay worries ships will run out of food and fuel if forced to wait beyond June 7. The next favorable tide is on June 19. Officers cheer Stagg at 2130 when he predicts a break in the storm, followed by thirty-six hours of weather clear enough for bombers to fly. As Eisenhower paces, Leigh-Mallory still wants to postpone, Smith sees a "helluva gamble" but that the invasion is possible, Tedder thinks it "chancy," and Montgomery says, "Go!" At 2145, Eisenhower gives the order to go. Ramsay rushes to advise the fleet, which resumes sailing by 2300. Horizontal rain greets Eisenhower at 0330, but

Stagg assures him it will end by dawn. The window of good weather, however, is down to one day, which means that the first waves will get ashore but follow-up units may not. Eisenhower again asks for opinions and none have changed. Another postponement would be agonizing and could let the Germans learn the secret. Eisenhower's prime concern, as always, is for the men. He knows some must be sacrificed but wants it to be as few as possible. All cheer another "go" order and leave him within thirty seconds, alone in symbolic isolation - the senior commander having done all he can. After breakfast, he walks among the troops on the docks and after lunch pens a press release in the event of failure, accepting "any blame or fault."

Airborne troopers spend the afternoon of June 5 dressing for battle and bitching over the extra armaments they must carry. Pathfinders go first to mark drop zones with 65-lb. Eureka/ Rebecca Radar Beacon Systems to signal the lead C-47 in each flight. They also carry carrier pigeons, one proclaiming victory and the other defeat, to be released at dawn. GIs talk about chances of survival and seek to reconcile "Thou shalt not kill" with their orders (chaplains have been assuring them war is a special case). The challenge/password/response is issued: "Flash," "Thunder," and "Welcome." Everyone receives metal "crickets" for non-verbal communication. At 1900, Eisenhower visits the 101st and is assured they will take care of things for him. Towards dusk, the order to "Chute up" comes and the men board C-47s whose fuselages and wings have received three bands of white "war paint" to prevent friendly-fire accidents. As night falls, Eisenhower calls out "Good luck!" and pilots start their engines. At ten-second intervals, they roll out heavily and climb, leaving Eisenhower alone again, with tears in his eyes. Ramsay, in his diary, commends them to God, trusting their "invisible assets" will tip the balance.

Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary and Analysis

The chapter title, "Cracking the Atlantic Wall," comes from the reminiscences of Sgt. Elmo Jones, 505th PIR, a pathfinder, charged with laying out lighted Ts on the ground. Unlike most of the eighteen missions thrown off course by cloudbanks and antiaircraft fire, Jones' team lands on target and accomplishes its mission. Maj. John Howard's D Company, Ox and Bucks, also lands on target by glider and routs fifty defenders in five minutes. Behind them come 13,400 U.S. and 7,000 British comrades ferried by novice pilots, ignorant of weather conditions. Hitting clouds over the coast, they instinctively peel off, just as all hell breaks loose, with searchlights, tracers and explosions filling the skies. Most accelerate and take evasive actions, spilling passengers and cargo. Virtually every C-47 is hit and many are lost. Terrified troopers, feeling hopeless and nauseous in the bouncing aircraft, get the "green light" to jump at too low or too high an altitude. Four refuse to jump, but the rest exit at a record rate. The planes' excessive airspeed subjects them to intense shock as chutes deploy and badly scatters the "sticks" over the landscape.

The 506th is supposed to land ten kilometers southwest of Ste.-Mire-Yglise, but several sticks come down in town, where a barn fire rages, and Germans are overseeing bucket brigades. These GIs find cover, play dead, or die. When a second wave comes over, the Germans are alert, as depicted in *The Longest Day.* The survivor who tells the story feels himself the loneliest man, or rather, boy in the world. Outside Ste-Marie-du-Mont, Germans set fire to the barn that serves as a GI assembly point and use the light to slaughter descending troopers. Standard procedure calls for "rolling up the stick," with the first and last jumpers converging on the center of the plane's flight path. It works well in practice sessions but fails on D-Day. Some men are alone all night, desperately clicking crickets. By contrast, the 2nd of the 505th has an excellent drop, thanks to its pathfinders, twenty-seven of its thirty-six sticks landing within a mile of target. On the German side, Lt. Arthur Jahnke at La Madeleine notes heavier air traffic than usual, but grows concerned only when he hears gunfire from the rear. Eighteen members of the 101st land nearby and are taken prisoner. With communication lines cut, Jahnke cannot report his catch, and he cannot understand why the POWs are anxious to move to the rear.

Men of the 82nd Airborne encounter a "special hell," because reconnaissance has failed to detect that the fields are flooded. Overloaded, thirty-six drown, while others must cut free of harnesses while underwater or aquaplaning behind chutes caught in the wind. Survivors are often pinned down by enemy fire, but one, reaching high ground, encounters a GI, who back in England, has promised to "get his ass." Instead, they hug as best buddies and trade stories. One full stick of the 507th goes missing, 173 suffer broken limbs, and 63 become POWs, most trying to get free of their chutes. The Germans interrogate them harshly to learn how many they are.

German antiaircraft batteries do a "creditable job," by comparison with "confused and hesitant" ground troops, who are leaderless and unable to tell if this is an invasion, scattered raids, or Resistance operations. Sabotaged landlines keep the *Wehrmacht* in barracks, cut off from orders, that even as accomplished a commander as Haydte, feels obliged to await. His 3,500 elite troops turn out rapidly and confidently but lack transport or adequate weapons. To the east, British and Canadian gliderborne and paratroops also find the Germans immobilized by their command structure. Luck's 125th Regiment assembles and mans its vehicles, but only Hitler can order them into action. He is asleep, as are Rundstedt, Rommel, Dollmann, and Feuchtinger.

At 0300, gliders land near Ranville on fields cleared by paratroopers, while at Hiersville antiaircraft fire forces gliders to cut loose too high and circle too long. Allied intelligence has mysteriously failed to realize that French hedgerows can grow six feet tall and are impenetrable, quite unlike the English variety that foxhunters jump. Compared with these, Rommel's asparagus does little. Between hedgerows, the sunken roads form trenches for the defenders. The result is tragic slaughter. Of the 957 members of the 82nd that head out, 25 are killed, 118 wounded, and 14 missing. A 16% casualty rate indicates someone has made grave mistakes, but it falls far short of Leigh-Mallory's prediction of 70% losses.

Assuming that the Merville battery by the mouth of the Orne could disrupt, if not repulse operations on Sword Beach, the D-Day planners throw at it a combined assault: 1) RAF bombers to stun the Germans and create foxholes; 2) a vertical envelopment to penetrate barbed wire and mines and destroy the guns; and, if necessary 3) a naval bombardment. Lt. Col. T. B. H. Otway with a force of 180 men aboard gliders and 570 paratroopers commands. The RAF misses the target and gliders, supposed to crash-land against the casement walls, are scattered. Collecting 150 men, Otway makes a frontal assault that succeeds and the naval bombardment is called off with fifteen minutes to spare. Over half of the attackers fall, while only twenty-two of the two hundred defenders survive to become POWs. The Merville guns turn out to be outdated and pose little danger.

Three bridges over the Dives River must be blown, and Maj. A. J. C. Rosevear, a civil engineer before the war, is assigned to two of them. He receives dozens of "General Wade" explosive charges and a squad. Misdropped, seven gather, commandeer a jeep and trailer, and head to Troarn, picking up eight more troopers en route. Rosevear divides men and charges between Bures and Troarne, both of which are destroyed. Canadians are assigned to destroy another bridge downstream. Disoriented, they are led by a French girl, who is out cutting phone wires to German headquarters, which she demands they assault. Sticking to orders, they destroy the unguarded bridge.

All told, the British airborne does well in achieving its goals. They are, however, isolated behind enemy lines, short of weapons, out of communications and ignorant of when Commandos might reach the Pegasus Bridge. On the right flank, the Americans do worse. Only a handful of companies regain half-strength. Predawn objectives call for the 101st Airborne to seize four inland exits behind Utah Beach, destroy two bridges across the Douve River, and establish bridgeheads downstream. For the 82nd, orders are to

seal off the Cotentin from the south and hold both banks of the Merderet. The failure of airborne divisions to achieve their objectives later makes some think it would have been better to have landed at dawn. Meanwhile, before dawn, Heydte receives attack orders: clear the area between Carentan and Ste.-Mire-Yglise. He is confident he can do so with an overstrength regiment of tough kids raised on Nazi ideology. Elite German and American units are about to face off in a "trial of systems."

Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary and Analysis

"'The Greatest Show Ever Staged'" examines the air bombardment that precedes the beach landings, and "A Long, Endless Column of Ships" discusses the naval crossing and bombardment. Unifying the chapters, from the point of view of the infantry storming the beach, is the fact that *neither* operation is effective, but both are dramatic and long remembered. The Allies put 3,467 heavy bombers, 1,645 medium bombers, and 5,409 fighters in the air on D-Day, and the Luftwaffe shoots down none. Flak brings down 113. The critical mission has been accomplished in April and May: isolating the battlefield by preventing German tanks and trucks to move up and clearing the *Luftwaffe* from the skies. At dusk, four JU-88s venture out over Omaha, "a lucrative, can't-miss target," but a staggering amount of flak brings them down.

The Allies fly 14,000 sorties on D-Day, withholding no reserves. Since 1939, (RAF) or 1942, (USAAF), airmen have been at war, enduring cold, cramped, fearful, and boring hours en route to Germany, followed by an hour or more of a special hell of flak and fighters. They take fearful casualties: 12,000 men and 2,000 planes in the two months before D-Day. Such forces are not suited for the tactical support of ground troops but are used thus nonetheless on and before D-Day. RAF Bomber Command leads off, hitting coastal batteries and Caen at midnight, followed at first-light by 1,200 B-17s ("Flying Fortresses") and B-24s ("Liberators"), pounding Calvados and B-26s ("Marauders") hitting Utah. Their objective is to prepare the ground for the infantry by stunning German gunners to keep them holed up and to blast foxholes. After breakfast, the crews climb into their planes. Darkness and rain make taxi-out and take-off maddening, and clouds cause pilots to get separated.

Flying at 500 feet, Marauder crews see the "magnificent operation" underway below. Hunting targets, the B-26s run into "withering, heavy, and accurate" flak, and at the ordered altitude cannot use bombsights. Swinging out over the peninsula en route home, the crews are sickened to see crashed gliders and fear things are going badly. After a second breakfast, they head for St.-Lf and inland targets. At 20,000 feet (10,000 lower than normal), Flying Fortresses see no details and drop their loads - a third more 500-lb. bombs than usual - blindly wherever radar-equipped pathfinders order. Most are wasted, falling harmlessly. At La Madelein, though, Jahnke huddles in his shelter as a "carpet of bombs" hits the dunes, wounding him. This veteran of the Eastern Front has seen nothing like it. His heavy guns are destroyed, communications broken, and troops ready to surrender. As the sky brightens, Jahnke first sees the armada. At Carentan, Heydte is kept from moving vehicles into battle by A-20 "Havoc" bombers. In Caen, the Germans retaliate by executing eighty French Resistance prisoners.

Fighter pilots are the glamorous "knights in shining armor" of World War II, and P-47 pilots, recently upstaged by the longer-ranged P-51s, are bored, strafing targets in France. On D-Day, they are relegated to patrolling for U-boats and feel uninvolved in

what they see below them. Escorting Dakotas tugging gliders is more exciting, but seeing the toll in the hedgerows is disconcerting. With a distinctive shape that lessens chances of friendly-fire accidents, the P-38 "Lightning" draws duty over crowded Normandy, but the *Luftwaffe* lies low. Ground crews, staff officers, and planners who make D-Day possible are also disappointed to miss the action.

At sea, 250 minesweepers work to remove the Germans' most effective naval defense, clearing a wide channel from the Isle of Wight to Point "Z," the center of "Piccadilly Circus." They then clear and mark lanes to France and finally sweep the shallows. Destroyers from three nations cover them. Next comes the flotilla of slow, unmaneuverable LCTs, each carrying four DD tanks and ammunition. Plans call for the tanks to launch five kilometers offshore, timed to be firing as the first wave of infantry wades ashore. Behind them come six battleships, twenty cruisers, and sixty-eight destroyers. The expendable "Old Ladies" are to draw fire away from the beaches by dueling with heavy German batteries. After them come the various transports (LCIs, LCCs, LSTs, LCMs) and unwieldy "Rhino ferries" carrying heavy equipment. Despite wind and rough seas, there are no major collisions and the schedule is kept. The Germans' measly fleet stays in port until radar finally detects the armada at 0309. Adm. Krancke then orders shore batteries made ready and dispatches E-boats and two armed trawlers.

Aboard the Allied transports, cooks serve breakfast before a series of bos'n's whistles call Navy hands to battle stations, assault troops to demarcation areas, and "Away all boats." Higgins boats are lowered into the water with only young coxswains aboard and "grossly overloaded" infantrymen and combat engineers then jump into them from nets. Many suffer broken legs and several are crushed. To crowd thirty enlisted and two officers aboard, all must stand. Loaded boats circle and bob, and this motion causes the seasick men to vomit. Men feel "naked, defenseless," sweating despite the cold, and filled with "tension, fear, and anticipation." Shortly before 0520, they watch the air battle begin as the shoreline becomes "a broken necklace of flame." At 0535, German batteries return fire on the fleet and the battleships respond like Zeus hurling thunderbolts, "a thousand Fourth of Julys rolled into one." By 0550, spotter planes can direct fire, but at least two are accidentally shot down. For all the shelling, little is accomplished. The targets are too hard to crack, even by 14-in. shells. German gunners may be deafened or knocked out, but are scarcely "neutralized." Even smaller beach fortifications survive to deliver withering fire on men and tanks. Things might have been different had several more hours been devoted to the softening up.

As the warships re-target inland, the LCT(R)s form a line to launch 14,000 rockets, most of which also fall harmlessly. After the LCT(R)s come the Sherman tanks (DDs) aboard LCTs. The force splits and all but three DDs in the left group sink before anyone thinks to raise the ramp up, drive ashore, and deliver the survivors, who commence laying down suppressing fire. Lt. Rockwell in the other group dares break radio silence to get the battalion commander to agree to exit onshore. Rockwell's seven LCTs follow his lead, the tank crews eagerly shooting over the bows at the bluffs. One LCT is lost to a mine, but the others achieve the critical timing needed to drop the ramp at the proper depth for tanks to enter the battle.

At *WD* 62, German Pvt. Franz Gockel is at his post behind a machine gun at 0400 and ordered by an NCO not to shoot "too soon." At first light, it looks to him as if ships are "passing for review" offshore of WN 62. When they open fire, the earth shakes. Gockel is surprised the Allies are attacking at high tide; Rommel had assured them otherwise in May. The sea comes alive. When WN 62 fires its 75mm cannon at a tank, it fires back and explodes the casement - precisely at 0630 on Omaha Beach.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

"We'll Start the War from Right Here" examines the 4th Division's amazing success in the first zone assaulted from the sea. The chapter title comes from Brig. Gen. Roosevelt's (apocryphal) pronouncement upon discovering they are a half-mile off target. Plans call for thirty-two "swimming" tanks to land at 0630, followed by the 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry, aboard twenty Higgins boats divided between Tare Green and Uncle Red beaches. The second wave of thirty-two Higgins boats follows five minutes later, bringing ashore more infantry plus demolition teams. The third wave, ten minutes later, brings bulldozer tanks and "regular" Shermans. The fourth wave, two minutes later, brings Engineer Combat Battalions (ECBs). Tides, wind, waves, and smoke contribute to the snafu, but the loss of three out of four LCCs (see previous chapter) is the primary factor. Higgins boats outrun the slow tanks. Roosevelt is on the first boat to hit shore. Luck is with them because Jahnke's fortifications at Exit 2 are less formidable than at the target (Exit 3) - and have been knocked out by Marauders. Thus, only scattered small-arms fire is encountered.

Even that appears formidable, however, from the Higgins boats. The coxswain and machine gunner aboard one operate blindly, ducking behind bulkheads. Hitting a sandbar 200 meters offshore, the coxswain insists the troops disembark so he can flee. After one more failed approach, the infantrymen angrily jump into waist-high water and slug ashore. Fortunately, the Germans remain in shock and minded to surrender. Capt. Howard Lees, commanding E Company, reaches the dunes and is surprised nothing looks like the sand tables in England. Roosevelt, the Navy control officer, two battalion commanders, and the regimental CO study a map and conclude they are a mile south of target - precisely where Col. Van Fleet had wanted to land but the Navy refuses to enter such shallow water. Roosevelt becomes a legend, deciding between shifting to the correct landing zone and heading directly inland from where they stand, an obvious enemy weak point to be exploited.

Ten teams of engineers and naval demolition teams (Seabees plus Army engineers) arrive, heavily laden with explosives and set to work destroying obstacles, proceeding from deep water inland, ahead of rising tides that will cover them. Most Seabees are older, trained using explosives in Western mines, and recruited knowing the duty is hazardous, and they are expendable. Once the outer obstacles are blown, Utah Beach turns into a "beehive," bustling with boats, bulldozers, half-tracks, and tanks free to move inland. During the clearing of poles and Belgian gates in the second line, landing craft discharge troops in line of fire. Sgt. Al Pikasiewicz is wounded rushing to pull them to safety. Finally, 237th ECB blasts the seawall. All the while, 88-mm. shells rain in ineffectively; Americans wade ashore, and Germans surrender.

At 0645, the Shermans arrive belatedly, firing as they come. Separating to look for an opening in the seawall, one group accepts the surrender of Soviet Georgian conscripts

and is alerted to a minefield. Sending five tanks toward Pouppeville, which he hopes the 101st Airborne holds, Capt. John Ahearn heads south, looking for targets. When a landmine immobilizes his tank, Ahearn continues on foot and steps on an S-mine, mangling a leg. Engineers are busily removing 15,000 of these from the area. Lt. Elliot Richardson is among the medics risking his life to retrieve the wounded. Capt. George Mabry, S-3 (operations officer) of 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry, comes upon members of G Company caught in a minefield with three wounded. Anywhere he turns, he risks mines. Firing on the run, he storms an enemy pillbox, killing or capturing the occupants. Requisitioning two tanks, he head for Pouppeville, joining forces en route with Lt. Tighe, who has lost three tanks to mines and is cautious about the surviving two. They balance speed (to avoid drawing mortar fire) with caution (to avoid mines) as they approach a bridge wired for demolition. They capture the Germans responsible, who disconnect the charges for them and are sent as POWs back to the largely-secured beach, where Roosevelt's greatest problem is congestion. Mabry pushes forward on the causeway and sends out scouts, who meet up with elements of Gen. Taylor's 101st Airborne. With the link-up of the 101st and 4th, Exit 1 is fully in U.S. hands. Their next joint objective is Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.

Scheduled to land at 1030, the 12th Infantry spends four long hours bobbing offshore, watching. Roosevelt orders them to follow the 8th Regiment rather than move on their original target. Their CO, Col. Russell "Red" Reeder knows where they are and charges through a hole in the seawall and over the dune. He observes Roosevelt looks tired. Reeder's objective is to link up with the 82nd Airborne at St.-Martin-de-Varreville. When neither exit is expedient, Reeder elects to cross the inundate area between. Aerial reconnaissance is wrong, assuring them the water is ankle-depth; it is waist-depth to over-the-head, and stretches for two kilometers. Occasional snipers worry the men less than does the fear of drowning. They cross successfully and bivouac short of their D-Day goal, but pleased with the situation. The 12th Infantry attains its objective and contacts the 82nd Airborne.

Much of the achievement is due to support from the warships, which rain suppressing fire wherever forward observers or spotter planes direct. Aboard the *Nevada,* 5-in. guns get so hot the paint peels off and empty shell casings build up to where firing must end so they can be thrown overboard rather than reloaded. Wounded American and German alike are evacuated to the big ships aboard returning landing craft. Among the wounded is Jahnke, who was hit by shrapnel from a German shell after being taken prisoner. Surveying the cleared beach as it becomes a "small city," Seabee Orval Wakefield and his comrades are "volunteered" to carry the wounded. As they reluctantly obey, they hear a rushing sound overhead and see gliders bringing in reinforcements; their cloud stretches from the horizon.

Casualties on Utah Beach are "astonishingly light," twenty times less than occur in training. Mines cause most. Equally astonishing is the movement of 20,000 men and 1,700 motorized vehicles ashore in one day. Pre-planning is scrapped at the outset, but the 4th Division meets nearly all its objectives. It succeeds so well because the Germans emphasize mines and the Atlantic Wall instead of preparing troops, while American commanders from Roosevelt down make quick and correct decisions. Finally,

the airborne troopers behind German lines hold the western exits, confuse the Germans, prevent counterattacks and knock out the batteries above Utah Beach.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

"*'Nous Restons Ici':* The Airborne in the Cotentin" opens at dawn of June 6, with the 82nd and 101s Airborne scattered across the peninsula in small pockets. Unit cohesion is gone and mixed groups fight more for survival than for planned objectives. This confusion affects the Germans, who cannot determine the size of the attacking force. Radios have short ranges and are easily jammed. Gen. Ridgeway, "a very brave and forceful man," can only gather data on what is happening around him, but hardly head a functioning command post. Dawn brings euphoria but also the realization that they have lost their "best ally," concealment. Having lost most of their heavy equipment, the paratroopers are wisest to evade the Germans, but with a "can-do" attitude, they fight in the hedgerows, typically getting wounded and pinned down, with the German machine-gunners being unable to lower their muzzles enough to hit them worse.

The northern exits from Utah crossing flooded fields are No. 3 near Audouville-La-Hubert and No. 4 near St.-Martin-de-Varreville. They are assigned to the 502nd PIR. Having landed near Ste.-Mire-Yglise and collected seventy-five men while wandering overnight, Lt. Col. Robert Cole skirmishes with a German patrol before entering St.-Martin, to find the battery damaged and deserted. Cole splits his forces to descend on both exits at once and succeeds by noon. Some 50 older Germans surrender and are then amazed at how few Americans there are.

Inland from St.-Martin stands a German barracks marked WXYZ on U.S. maps. Only fifteen men can be spared to capture it, and Sgt. Harrison Summers leads the reluctant team, which watches him singly charge the first farmhouse, surprising and killing four Germans and pursuing the survivors to a second house. Pvt. William Burt is inspired to set up a light machine gun and lay down suppressing fire. By the fourth house, the Germans are shooting back but miss Summers, who is exhausted and in shock. The squad replenishes his ammunition and he continues the attack, aided by Pvt. John Camien. They surprise and slay German artillerymen eating breakfast and clear the last building by setting fire to the haystack beside it. Holding ammunition, the shed explodes. Survivors are either shot or taken prisoner. Summers collapses, sure he will never do anything like that again. He receives a battlefield commission and the Distinguished Service Cross, and is remembered among airborne troops as the "Sergeant York of World War II."

At 0600, Taylor makes his first D-Day command decision: to head east to help the 4th Infantry. Near Pouppeville, they confront sixty men of the German 91st hunkered down and take three hours clearing them out. This costs eighteen American lives against twenty-five Germans (plus forty surrenders) but gives Taylor control of Exit 1. He sends a patrol to contact the 4th, which meets Mabry, whose report inspires Taylor to look for what to attack next.

When the German 6th Parachute Regiment goes on the attack, naval gunfire is called in, and they produce an unendurable, endless, terrifying storm. Heydt goes by motorcycle to Ste.-Marie-du-Mont, climbs the steeple and is astonished by the view of Utah Beach and the nearly nonexistent German defense. Four 105-mm. cannons capable of hitting the beaches and warships are not firing. By radio, Heydt orders his 1st Battalion to take and hold Ste.-Marie-du-Mont and Holdy - a bad overextension of forces - and put the guns into action. Heydt is the only German regimental commander on the job that morning. The *Wehrmacht* has gotten used to the "soft life of occupation." As early as 0615, word reaches Gen. Speidel about the massive bombardments, and a half hour later, it reaches Rundstedt. When the reporter is confident he can throw the Allies back, the generals go back to bed. Gen. Jodl refuses to awaken Hitler, thereby delaying the dispatching of the *Panzer Lehr* division until late afternoon. Berlin radio reports the landings at 0700 and SHAEF at 0930. Only at 1030 does Rommel hear about it and races to his headquarters by dusk. Operation Fortitude has convinced the commanders that Normandy is "*an* invasion" but not *the* invasion, which *must* occur at Pas-de-Calais. Three months later, they still believe this. In the field, Americans win, though outnumbered, attacking entrenched Germans, using tactics learned in training, common sense, and "calculated courage." Early bravado gives way to less chance taking as young GIs realize they can be killed, but at this point, they drive out Heydt's battalion with a mere platoon.

Thanks to the scattered drop, the 101st does worse with its second major mission: to secure the southern flank and opening the way to Carentan. Still, ad hoc, undermanned and underarmed units, unfamiliar with one another, put Heydt's elite paratroopers on the defensive. At St.-Cfme-du-Mont, the Germans hold on to the road to Carentan and the railway and road bridges over the Douve, making reinforcements possible. As soon as the battery at Beaumont is working, Americans contact the USS *Quincy,* whose guns silence it. Still, Capt. Shettl finds himself stuck at the bridges on the lower Douve until late in the day.

The general confusion is compounded for the 82nd Division by its position astride the Merderet River, which has flooded to the size of a small, shallow lake. The 82nd cannot control the two crossings at La Fiire and Chef-du-Pont during the night as hoped and must spend much of D-Day fighting with hand-held weapons against tanks and artillery. The crossings seemingly secure, Gen. James Gavin and a wounded Lt. Col. Charles Timmes take their main force on the offensive, but fail to take the well-defended Amfreville. The Germans counterattack with tanks, lose two but draw the Americans away from the bridgehead northward. The 82nd's scattered units fight in isolation for two days. Chef-du-Pont is systematically cleared of snipers, who head for the critical bridge, fight off a mad American rush, dig in, and survive two larger assaults before launching a counter-attack in three tiny French Renault tanks. They lose one and retreat west, leaving the two sides caught in a stalemate at the causeway. A German who rises to surrender is stupidly shot dead by a young American making his first life-and-death decision; this convinces the other Germans not to follow suit. A line of German infantry approaches from the Americans' rear, and a field piece begins firing from across the river, just as C-47s and gliders deliver the weapons and ammunition needed to go on the offensive. The situation is improving as night falls, but they wonder about action on

Utah Beach. Their fears are alleviated at midnight, when reconnaissance units of the 4th Infantry pull into town. Overall, the "hodgepodge of troops" had done well for never having trained together.

Just before daylight on D-Day, the 3rd Battalion, 505th PIR, takes Ste.-Mire-Yglise, a quiet, inconsequential Norman village that lies on highway N-13, near where the second glider landing is scheduled to land before dusk. For strategic purposes, both sides must control N-13, which links Cherbourg, Carentan, Caen, and Paris. A skeptical Frenchman suspects this is just a raid, but is assured, "*'Nous Restons Ici"* - we are staying here. Dead paratroopers hang from trees, "like rag dolls shot full of holes," and one trooper is found to have turned a German foxhole into a "personal Alamo," using up all his ammunition killing nine enemy before dying alone. Col. Vandervoort, despite his broken ankle, comes to Ste.-Mire-Yglise to defend the northern approaches, although he lacks sufficient numbers to set up an all-around perimeter defense. They pick up two working 57mm, AT guns, which they deploy on the northern end of town. When a Frenchman bicycles up N-13 and announces Americans are bringing a large number of POWs, Vandervoort rightly grows suspicious, and he challenges the force. The 91st *Luftlande* Division outnumbers the Americans five-to-one, but are flanked and engaged. Accurate German mortar fire inflicts heavy casualties, setting up a "Little Big Horn" situation in reverse. In the course of the American retreat, E Company moves up and hits the Germans fast and hard. Their momentum breaks and the mutual retreat seems like "an unfinished ball game."

Lt. Turner Turnbull's heroic stand allows Krause and Vandervoort to fight off a stronger counterattack from the 795th Regiment in the south, the largest counterattack mounted by the *Wehrmacht* on D-Day, supported by 88mm guns on high ground. The dogged defenders get "pissed off" at the Germans - and aggressive. Reinforcements come in by gliders, which crash in the hedgerows. During the night, the Germans shoot flares, rifles, and mortars, and shout orders and threats to intimidate the Americans, who respond in kind. The Germans do not attack, but the GIs fear the invasion has been a failure, and they will never see another morning. Ste.-Mire-Yglise is held, however, barely, and is remembered as the 82nd Airborn's "most significant operation" on D-Day. Smaller actions by isolated units are as notable. Ridgeway fears the 82nd may be destroyed before it can consolidate and link up with the 4th Infantry.

To the East, the 101st opens the causeways and links up with the seaborne forces. Of the 6,600 who drop into Normandy, only 2,500 are fighting as organized units by dusk. With many men unaccounted for, no casualty rate can be ascertained, but it may be 10% — lower than Leigh-Mallory's fears but high for one day of fighting. They payoff is the low casualty rate in the 4th Infantry, who might well have been killed on the beach by German guns at Brecourt Manor and Holdy and overcome inland on the causeways, had the 101st not fought these behind enemy lines. Had the 101st been dropped further behind the lines, though, they would have been so weak as to be a liability. Eisenhower is right in opposing both Leigh-Mallory and Marshall.

Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary and Analysis

"Visitors to Hell" turns the focus to Omaha Beach, equally chaotic but far bloodier. Both sides know its ten kilometers of firm sand is an obvious landing zone. Omaha is a defender's dream: constricted, crescent-shaped, with 300-400 meters exposed at low tide, shrinking to only a few meters at high tide. Next comes a band of shingle (small rounded stones), which is impassible by vehicles, then a seawall 1-4 meters high, then a paved road, then a V-shaped antitank ditch, then a flat swampy area, and finally steep bluffs thirty or more meters high. Five small "draws" (ravines) slope gently up to the tableland, whence roads of various qualities lead inland. Omaha cannot be outflanked and offers natural obstacles that Rommel enhances with more mines than at Utah and heavy weapons on the high ground. Allied planners hate the idea of crossing such a killing field but have no choice. They cannot afford a gap between Utah and the British beaches. The Germans use everything they learned in World War I at Omaha. Still, the Allies are confident because: 1) Intelligence puts the low-quality 716th Infantry Division here; 2) B-17s are sure to neutralize the bunkers and create foxholes; 3) naval bombardment will destroy all life; and 4) 40,000 men and 3,500 motorized vehicles are involved. All goes wrong when the capable 352nd Division, covers the beach; and at H-Hour, Omaha looks peaceful, untouched, and green.

Planning is elaborate and precise. In a linear attack, the 116th Regiment, 29th Division lands to the right (west), supported by C Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the 16th Regiment, 1st Division, lands on the left (east). There are eight sectors (Charlie, Dog Green, Dog White, Dog Red, Easy Green, Easy Red, Fox Green, and Fox Red). Both regiments land two battalions in the first waves in a "column of companies." Ahead of the infantry come DD tanks, underwater demolition teams, and Army engineers. The infantry's task is to suppress German fire, while demolition blows up obstacles and marks paths ashore. Following waves bring in reinforcements on tight schedules. Within two hours, vehicles are to be heading inland for objectives eight kilometers. away. Nothing works as planned. Except for Company A, 116th, no unit lands where it should. Winds and tides shift landing craft leftward. At least two-hundred boats swamp. The first wave arrives seasick , exhausted and confused - and believing German strong points have been knocked out. The Germans hold their fire until the ramps drop. LCA 1015 is vaporized. Misplaced landings bunch Americans, making it easier for the Germans to concentrate fire. LCI 94 aborts it's run on the beach and the rest of his flotilla perish. Its skipper, Popeye, cruises down the beach 100 meters and loses only five of twenty-six. Twenty of the first 200 die short of the beach. The first fifteen minutes on Omaha is "an unmitigated disaster."

A Company, 116th is on target, but one of its LCAs sinks beneath men's feet. Companies G and F drift east, leaving A Company to lose 96% of their effective strength. Virtually everyone is wounded. Realizing they can accomplish little, survivors abandon their waterlogged equipment and seek the shingle, where they huddle together

and help one another. At 0730, they should already be atop the bluff. The sacrifice is not in vain, however, because the first wave carries ashore weapons, rations, and other equipment that later waves will pick up and use. F Company, 116th, lands near target, but G Company drifts far left and they mingle together opposite heavily fortified Les Moulins. Again, the Germans concentrate fire. GIs seek only to survive, but at the shingle find concertina wire they cannot detonate and beyond only more misery and death. They hunker down, open to mortar rounds, unorganized, leaderless and disarmed. E Company lands farthest from target and intermixes with 16th Regiment, 1st Division. Pvt. Harry Parley, furnishes this chapter's title, observing he has become "a visitor to hell." He nearly drowns trying to unbuckle from his flamethrower but is dragged to his feet by a buddy. The Germans are aiming at the advancing line, so stragglers like Parley are luckily ignored and survive. At the shingle, he finds chaos as strangers he has never trained with dig foxholes. The following waves all land off-target because coxswains cannot see landmarks. The tide is coming in rapidly and between 0630 and 0800 it rises eight feet. Sgt. Benjamin McKinney, a combat engineer attached to C Company, lobs hand grenades into a German position near the shingle, putting the 116th on the offensive.

The follow-up waves get through relatively unscathed because mined obstacles are well underwater and the Germans have too many targets to concentrate fire. By 0730, assault teams move forward in every sector. The 116th main command group arrives at 0730 but gets hung up on a beach obstacle and gunfire. The regimental commander, Col. Charles Canham, is wounded leading the charge ashore. Brig. Gen. Norman Cota decides plans are obsolete and everyone will perish unless they press to the top of the bluff. Cota stands on the seawall, shouting orders, directions, and encouragement and is one of the first through the wire. Capt. Robert Walker of HQ Company is frustrated at being fierce, trained, but virtually helpless, so he picks up a rifle, and heads to climb the bluff on his own. Maj. Sidney Bingham, CO of the 2nd Battalion, 116th, organizes F Company and gets it moving upward. Around 0745, natural leaders among junior officers, NCOs, and even privates, are doing the same. Staying on the beach means certain death.

The Germans fail to counterattack because: 1) they lack sufficient numbers (just 2,000 men: 250 per kilometer); 2) at 0735 Gen. Kraiss assumes the invasion is halted and summons only one battalion, which arrives midday; and 3) German infantrymen are not trained for assaults, only to hold their position and keep firing. The sacrifice of good Americans is appalling. *The Longest Day* is inaccurate: men do not storm the beach like banshees; they hunker down in the water and crawl, taking up to an hour to get ashore. Boys turn into men and go on to do the jobs for which they are trained. This is the critical moment when it is seen if "a democracy can produce young men tough enough to lead by example. Most leave the beach simply because it is "bullshit" to die on the beach. They decide to act like infantry.

"Utter Chaos Reigned" looks eastward on Omaha Beach to the plight of the 16th Regiment. Its combat experience in North Africa and Sicily avails little, as they land, confused, off-target, off-schedule, and intermingled with the 116th. Most officers - the first men off each Higgins boat - fall before hitting the beach. Most of the DD tanks sink

and the rest are disabled. Casualties resemble World War I charges across no-man's land. Life expectancy is "about zero" for men who arrive seasick and burdened like pack mules. No one takes command as survivors bunch up at the seawall above a rapidly contracting beach. One platoon from E Company, led by Lt. John Spaulding, works its way up the bluff, making use of every irregularity in the ground, and firing on the enemy; they crest the hill at 0800. Such initiative by small units is what the Army has hoped for in providing two years of training.

At 0800, other small groups are ascending, unaware of one another. L Company is on the far left, arriving at 0700, a half-hour late, and a kilometer off-target. Because no company is scheduled to land there, engineers have not blown obstacles, and boats explode. Men crawl in among bodies, wreckage, in a state of complete confusion. An unknown officer rallies twenty men to follow him to a tiny draw, and other platoons follow. Companies E, F, and I are badly intermixed, off-target, off-schedule, and still taking casualties at the seawall. Urged on by junior officers and NCOs, men blow gaps in the barbed wire, engineers mark cleared paths through the minefields, and others clear pillboxes. Lt. William Dillon, "a good hunter" in his youth, finds a zigzagging German's path, and they follow it carefully.

Journalist Ernie Pyle writes about the "miracle" by which the Americans take and hold Omaha, but Ambrose argues it is no miracle - it is just what infantry always do in war. Junior officers and NCOs exercise "leadership of the highest order." As in World War I, once heroes break through, they must be reinforced, and this is where the "incredible production feats of American industry" come into play. The 16th Regiment loses more vehicles by 0830 than the German '352nd Division dreams exist - and there are "uncountable numbers" of such vehicles still waiting to land. There are so many, in fact, that they are more problem than solution as the tide comes in and the beach shrinks; the traffic jam must be broken for targets to turn into weapons again. Infantry must break through the draws.

"Traffic Jam: Tanks, Artillery, and Engineers at Omaha" focuses on how non-infantry units contribute to the chaos on Omaha Beach. War is a waste of men and materiel, justifiable only if it contributes to the ultimate goal of victory. Expenditures on Omaha are fearful, with equipment making a long journey from U.S. factories only to end up at the bottom of the Channel. Sherman tanks arrive first, just before H-Hour. After German 88mm guns hit the first two, the rest stay offshore, half under water, firing at enemy positions. LCTs arriving in the third wave still fall victim to mines. Some Sherman chassis are modified to hold 105mm howitzers. Four of these M-7s are carried per LCT, and are delivered to "softer spots" on the beach. As they near the beach, they open fire on the bluff and the men rejoice they are back in the war, doing their job, firing, adjusting elevations, and firing again, one shell every 30 seconds. At 2,000 meters, the howitzers cannot depress enough and cease fire. Sgt. Jerry Eades, an "experienced goldbrick" at home in Texas, organizes a "provisional platoon" of infantry, engineers, and artillerymen and leads them toward the bluff. Many specialists, having lost their equipment, join the attack.

Between 0630 and 0830, a shrinking beach rapidly fills with so many vehicles, they become a liability. Higgins boats bring in sixteen, five-man demolition teams, none to its designated target. Their job is to blow fifty-meter wide gaps. Half die as soon as the ramps drop. Survivors know what to do, without being told and in the wrong place. They blow every obstacle they can reach. Altogether, the demolition teams blow six partial gaps instead of the sixteen planned, but fail to mark them adequately with flags. As the tide rises, this causes problems for coxswains. Landmarks are obscured by smoke and haze, so without a clear path, PC 565 becomes a gunboat, firing on the bluff, before being destroyed. LCT 614 with two officers and twelve Navy enlisted men is scheduled to deliver twenty-five GIs, two bulldozers, and four jeeps with ammunition trailers at 0730. Overhead shells fly from the *Texas,* aimed at the bluff. No Americans have landed at Easy Red, so it appears "tranquil." For a moment, the briefing officers' claims are believable - until the ramp goes down and "all hell tore loose." The water is over men's heads, so skipper, Ens. Don Irwin retracts and spends an hour finding a gap in the obstacles. When the first two men off the ramp are killed, the others refuse to budge, and Irwin cannot bring himself to obey orders and force them off at gunpoint. His crew begs him to depart the intensifying fire.

At 0830, with the beach jammed and nothing moving, the commander of the 7th Naval Beach Battalion orders further landings suspended and vehicles on the beach withdrawn. Irwin is ordered by radio to anchor in the Channel and await orders. His LCT hangs up on an obstacle, but he keeps his head and floats free. The anchor cable then gets stuck and Irwin orders engines ahead full - and pulls up a sunken Higgins boat hooked to the anchor. Eventually they reach deep water. Over fifty inbound LCTs and LCIs are forced to circle offshore, adding to the confusion. Most skippers and crews are "amateurs at war," young and inexperienced. Seeing a neighboring boat hit, one skipper panics, backs over an anchor cable and fouls the screws. They are forced to off-load their equipment in choppy seas 500 meters offshore. It goes off without a hitch, but a passing admiral bawls the skipper out in front of his men. During the offloading, they see the gutsy pass by two German FW-190s over the beach, a scene made famous in *The Longest Day* and mentioned in all oral histories. The fleet opens fire, but they pass by unscathed.

One battalion of black soldiers take part in the initial assault on Omaha, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion (Colored), whose purpose is to prevent the *Luftwaffe* from strafing. Some 1,200 black soldiers also land on Utah Beach as truck drivers or port personnel, black Coast Guard personnel drive Higgins boats, and black sailors man the warships. Still, it is remarkable how few black servicemen are permitted to participate in D-Day, considering their future contributions in Korea and Vietnam.

The engineers' job is to blow up any obstacles left behind by the demolition teams and then direct traffic ashore, open exits, and mark paths through minefields. Their first hours are as frustrating as anyone's. Units charged with "dewaterproofing" vehicles find nothing to work on and join the infantry. Pvt. Al Littke's initial task is to serve as a "pack horse," carrying demolition charges to deposit beside obstacles. Unlike the leaderless infantry, Littke knows what to do: mark a safe path through the mines. He does so and other GIs follow. Later in the day, a brigadier general and colonel ask him how to get to

the top, and he proudly points to his white tape trail. Pvt. John Mather also follows the path with a team more or less intact, led by Lt. Allen. At the top, Allen realizes they are nowhere near their initial objective, and they are not armed for a firefight, so they return to the beach and again fail to find the correct exit. Mather is "angry and frustrated" at their "lack of action." Allen cannot act without orders from their CO, who is in a state of shock and dispirited. They listen to mortars and watch the tide go out.

Lt. Barnett Hoffner of the 6th ESB comes ashore with the rising tide and is dismayed to see all the blasted vehicles on the beach. Of sixteen demolition teams, only five make it in and three of them lose their equipment. Three of sixteen bulldozers make it but cannot maneuver because of GIs taking cover behind them. Lt. Col. Frank Walk, assistant beachmaster, lands at 0800 and is pinned down. Finding his CO "completely berserk," he takes command, very junior for such responsibility. Col. Paul Thompson, who runs an assault training center in England, commands the 6th ESB and wants badly to see how the training has prepared his troops. He sees engineers working very clumsily and is hit showing them how to do their job. His frustration is shared by every survivor of the first two hours ashore. By 0830, men are close to despair, being stopped cold by Rommel's fixed defenses. At *Widerstandsnest (WD)* 62, Pvt. Franz Gockel sees transports return to sea without unloading and believes the Americans are withdrawing.

"I Am a Destroyer Man," takes its title from reminiscences by someone on the beach grateful for the close-in firepower destroyers alone could offer. Few of the Navy Seabees, beachmasters, and spotters reach shore alive, and naval skippers are under orders not to fire without confirmed. German camouflage is excellent at 400 yards offshore, and no one knows where U.S. troops are on the bluff. Some frustrated skippers move destroyers in to 200 meters to hunt targets of opportunity, and at 0950, Adm. C. F. Bryant calls on all destroyers to take part, even at the risk of running aground. Some watch where tanks shoot and augment the fire with 5-in. shells. "Dodge City shootouts" take place between ship and shore. Five destroyers between them expend 3,180 rounds, and return to England with nearly empty lockers. The effect of this "heroic and risky action" is "electric." Enemy fire stops and the infantry can advance.

The Navy also offers outstanding medical care beginning at the beach, as the wounded and non-swimmers are dragged inland before the tide comes in. German snipers target medics. Care is rudimentary: tourniquets, quick wound cleansing, sulfa/penicillin, and morphine, and blood is in short supply. LCTs and DUKWs are jammed with wounded being transferred to hospital ships two miles offshore. There, doctors work for hours to save shattered bodies. War can transform trained killers into lifesavers in seconds. Prowling the beach, guns blazing, the *Harding* stops so her medical officer can aid wounded men. Returning, he finds an officer suffering appendicitis, and the skipper impatiently waits through treatment, thanks God, and resumes fire.

The Army Signal Corps and Coast Guard send photographers ashore in the first waves. The best known and perhaps bravest is Robert Capa of *Life* magazine. He shoots pictures from behind an obstacle, behind a burnt-out tank, and at the seawall with mortar shells raining in. Running low on film, he begs a ride on an LCI picking up wounded. While the film is being developed in London, an eager technician applies too

much heat and ruins all but eight of 106 shots. These, however, capture perfectly the chaos of Omaha Beach and are among the most famous pictures of D-Day. Hollywood director/ producer John Ford, head of the OSS photographic unit, leads a team of Coast Guard cameramen ashore with $1 million worth of gear. They film everything they see, losing some men. In London, the film is transferred to black-and-white for use in newsreels. Very little is released, however, because the government is afraid to show casualties on screen.

Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary and Analysis

"Will You Tell Me How We Did This?" and "Up the Bluff at Vierville" examine the D-Day exploits of Ranger Force (2nd and 5th battalions) in conjunction with the 116th Regiment as they assault the cliffs on Omaha Beach. The "game plan" is abandoned before action begins. C Company spends the day isolated; D, E, and F arrive late and off-target; special equipment fails to arrive or functions badly, and German 155mm cannons have been spirited out of their casements. Still, the assault on Pointe-du-Hoc is both famous and critical to the success of assaults on Omaha and Utah. Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder, Ranger CO, speaks the words of Chapter 21's title to his 14-year-old son on the tenth anniversary of the invasion.

The plan calls for C Company, within two hours of landing on Omaha's right flank, to follow A Company, 116th, up the draw, and clear a kilometer inland to Pointe-du-Hoc. If Rudder signals success, companies A and B follow, otherwise they circle the objective. Told the bombardment will make the landing a "cinch," the Rangers are cocky - until they see the rockets fall harmlessly short. When the ramp descends, they are hit hard. Of the 68 Rangers in C Company, 19 die, 18 are wounded, and 31 more seek shelter at the base of the sheer 30-meter cliff. There they are safe from machine guns but not from mortars and grenades ("potato mashers"). Their first minutes on French soil are nearly as disastrous as that of A Company, 116th.

The Rangers' CO, Capt. Ralph Goranson, and two platoon leaders are alive, and they know themselves to be elite and trained to climb the cliff. Lts. William Moody and Sidney Salomon lead the way carrying toggle ropes, which they secure and drop so the company can "monkey-walk" to the top. The remnants of C Company stand atop the cliff by 0730 and take out the farmhouse and communication trenches that fire on them. They guide the men of the 116th Regiment up. With no paratroopers inland, there are no ready reinforcements, while the Germans refresh themselves freely via trenches. The Americans lack the numbers to clear the area. Trenches are cleared only to be re-occupied. Most Rangers are green but outfight the Germans using "basic tactics carried out with enthusiasm balanced by proper caution." Two Americans die compared with sixty-nine Germans. Atop the cliffs, men fear the "Jerries" will drive them out until A and B companies arrive. C Company has scarcely started its critical mission, but has diverted machine-gun fire from the beaches.

Rudder lands in the lead boat, leading D, E, and F companies. One of the ten low-riding LCAs swamps and the rest take thirty-five minutes to reach the right landing area, giving the Germans time to recover from the bombardment. One DUKW is sunk. There is virtually no beach. Large chunks of clay soil dislodged by the bombardment make the cliffs slippery but provide a head start up. The London Fire Department has given the Rangers 25-meter extension ladders to mount on DUKWs, but only one can be extended. Sgt. William Stivison climbs atop and fires bursts over the crest at the crest of

each wild, 45° arc. Each LCA carries three pairs of rocket guns, which fire grapnels, pulling rope or rope ladders, but many are so heavy from sea spray that they fall short. Men find climbing easier than in England, but some lose their grip under these slippery conditions. Germans atop the cliff cut 2-3 ropes or toss grenades, but BARs and the *Satterlee* keep them back from the edge. Rangers camouflage grapnels as explosives to dissuade them further. Within five minutes, the vanguards are on top and within fifteen minutes, most of the fighting men are also. Rudder sends the "success" code, which dispatches the reserves to Omaha Beach.

The top of the cliff does not resemble aerial photographs, maps, or mock-ups; it is "a moonscape." Craters, ten meters across and two deep, are a "godsend" to the arriving Rangers. Tourists today are amazed that the Rangers climbed the sheer cliff; military professionals are impressed with what they accomplish at the top. After throwing off their disorientation, each platoon undertakes its specific tasks. When they reach the casements, the Rangers are amazed that the 155 cannons are dummies; the real ones have recently been evacuated. Small groups spread out to find them, inflicting and taking heavy casualties. Rudder sets up his Command Post (CP) and an aid station kept busy by "confused and confusing" fighting, with Germans popping up here-and-there and disappearing underground. The *Satterlee* takes out a machine gun still causing beach casualties, but the *Glasgow* accidentally shells Rudder's CP. F Company finds the guns camouflaged and ready to fire on Utah. A hundred Germans have distanced themselves from ammunition during the bombardment and are lazily forming up. Thermite grenades destroy the unwatched guns and ammunition, and by 0900, the Rangers return to the defensive with nothing heavier than mortars and BARs. By signal lamp and homing pigeon, they request ammunition and reinforcements, but are denied. Fortunately, three paratroopers lost from the 101st and two platoons of Rangers from Omaha arrive and join them.

Furious German counterattacks continue that day, that night, and the next day. The Rangers' situation is desperate but they prevail, thanks to rigorous training. Only 50 of the 200 who start out can still fight, but Pointe-du-Hoc is never lost. Later, writers claim it is a waste because the guns had been withdrawn, but this is wrong; they remain in working condition, there is an abundance of ammunition, and they can hit ships in the Channel and the men and vehicles on Utah and Omaha. Putting them out of commission and blocking enemy access to the roads mark the first time U.S. forces accomplish their mission.

"Up the Bluff at Vierville" shifts focus to the right (west) half of Omaha Beach. At 0830, when landings cease, the point comes that Eisenhower fears most and Rommel anticipates using. The 5,000 men ashore are cut off, potential hostages, half on and half off the beach. They are under fifty percent strength, exhausted, confused, wounded and lack cohesion. They look beaten, but individuals and small groups are on the move and others follow. This is war at its "most shocking, dangerous and decisive." Climbing the bluff is often lonely but also safer because the German trenches are situated to fire only on the beach, and geological irregularities offer shelter. Cover is offered from offshore and surviving tanks until the tide drowns their cannons.

Clumps of men require someone at some rank to motivate them. General Cota inspires by climbing the bluff through mortar shells. Mines slow movement in every sector. Reaching the top, GIs find Germans in trenches and behind hedgerows set up for interlocking fire. The men break into *ad hoc* fire teams, amazing the Germans by their aggressiveness. On the dirt road leading to Vierville, gunfire is light, but increases towards Pointe-du-Hoc. Posturing like an Old West gunfighter, Cota challenges and deploys his forces, including C Company, 116th, one of the few intact. As the *Texas* pounds away at the cement roadblock at the mouth of the draw, Cota separates his force to attack it and to clear the bluff to the east. Dazed by the shelling, five Germans surrender, and lead the GIs through the minefield. The massive wall finally yields to TNT, and engineers clear the rubble and mines and fill the antitank ditch.

Companies A and B of the 2nd Rangers, along with the 5th Ranger Battalion, have alternate missions, depending on Rudder's signal, which is supposed to be given by 0700. Lt. Col. Max Schneider, commanding the rangers, delays deciding until the last moment and then chooses to move on Vierville. With the *Texas* firing overhead, Rangers hit the beach at a virgin spot and believe they are unopposed - until the ramp drops. Schneider calls the landing efforts "a disaster," and, unwilling to waste his battalion, orders the remaining LCAs eastward to relative quiet on Dog Red beach. The 5th Rangers reach the seawall with only six casualties out of 450. Capt. John Raaen, CO of HQ Company, 5th Rangers, "trots" ashore and realizes he knows no one on this part of the beach. Raaen rallies shell-shocked strangers by giving specific assignments. Cota arrives and encourages individuals and small groups to move out. Whatever the exact words, "Rangers Lead the Way" becomes an official motto, whose implication survivors of the 116th resent. In fact, their C Company reaches the top first. Those cowering at the seawall are survivors of the decimated first wave and readily join platoons when armed and properly guided.

Schneider's HQ group collects German POWs, and he assigns his translator, Sgt. Victor H. Fast, to interrogate them. Fast has no training but proves a natural. He picks the youngest and most timid-looking German and gives him three choices: 1) lie and be sent to the Russians; 2) misinform and be turned over to a burly Jewish GI; and 3) tell the full truth and spend the rest of the war in comfort and go home afterwards. The prisoner points out minefields and hidden fortifications and offers other useful information. He does not mention the hedgerows bristling with machine guns, and the men are furious that the Air force has not blown them away as promised. There are no craters anywhere.

By 0900, 600 men, chiefly from C Company, 116th, and the Rangers penetrate German defenses but have no radios or heavy weapons to fight further. The exits are still blocked and the beaches jammed and under heavy fire. Reserve regiments cannot come ashore. The units are mixed as they enter the hedgerows, where they split into attack groups. The situation is not under control, and victory is far off. The battle for Omaha Beach has not gone according to plan, but disaster has been averted.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary and Analysis

"Catastrophe Contained: Easy Red Sector, Omaha Beach" focuses on the territory that becomes one of the most crowded, confused and bloodiest. General Omar Bradley commands the 250,000-man, 1st Army on Utah and Omaha beaches. He recalls D-Day as "a nightmare," won "by the slimmest of margins." His command post is aboard the USS *Augusta,* where he is frustrated by low visibility and no news. Bradley's impression is that the Allies are suffering an "irreversible catastrophe," and he agonizes about how to organize a withdrawal. Diverting the circling reserves to another beach is not feasible and could jeopardize the invasion as a whole. His direct subordinate, Maj. Gen. Leonard Gerow, aboard the USS *Ancon* is initially as blind. He sends his assistant closer, but from 500 meters it is clear only that the beaches are jammed, under effective fire, and the exits remain closed. Movement up the bluff is invisible. Unaware of the 0830 suspension of landings, he is disturbed to see LCTs milling around like "a stampeded herd of cattle" and landing no one. At 0945, Gerow submits a sketchy, but alarming, initial report.

Unique in military history, the wounded must be evacuated *toward* the enemy. Medics taking great risks can accomplish little, having lost equipment and supplies landing off-schedule and off-target. Still, medics are the most active people on the beach and do not hesitate to treat even the most severe wounds. Casualties are packed together like cigars. For many, the only hope is rapid evacuation, but this is impossible. The first members of the 61st Medical Battalion on Easy Red are clerks, who abandon typewriters, scrounge the debris for medical equipment, and help with casualties. Without proper equipment, surgeons merely give first aid.

At 0950, Gen. Clarence Huebner, commanding the 1st Division, orders his 18th Regiment ashore at Easy Red, the largest sector, just east of the center of Omaha. It is lonely for three hours, until the 115th Regiment, 29th Division (supposed to attack *Dog* Red, not *Easy* Red), mislands atop them, turning it into the most crowded and bloodiest sectors. With the tide high and obstacles covered, Navy and Army commanders clash over going ashore. At 1010, LCT 30 drives in at full speed, guns blazing, giving courage to other skippers. Many landing craft are lost to mines and artillery fire. Destroyers pound the enemy wherever they are spotted, and a half-track (M-15) shooting from deep water, takes out a pillbox near the E-1 Exit. The arrival of two regiments causes a "horrendous mix-up of men and units" and delays, but also puts a lot of firepower where it is needed. Only one tank makes it to E-1 and has to back off. The beach is variously likened to a shooting gallery and a Chicago slaughterhouse. Americans are sitting ducks for trained marksmen. At 1100, Gerow reports that the situation is still critical. For the first time, Bradley learns he faces the German 352nd Infantry Division - a detail Intelligence missed. Men, in fact, are advancing between exits E-1 and Easy 3.

Capt. Joe Dawson of G Company is the first American to stand atop the bluff. Halfway up through minefields, Dawson's company meets up with Lt. John Spaulding (see Chapter 17), who covers them. It is nearly vertical near the top, which affords "complete defilade" (protection) from the enemy above. Men scramble to the crest and pursue Germans retreating toward the E-3 Exit into the woods. Meanwhile, Spaulding heads west to St.-Laurent, through hedgerows, orchards, and two minefields, where no one is lost. They capture a Tobruk and communication trenches that can be approached from behind. Learning the objective has changed to Colleville, Spalding crosses hedgerows and orchards full of snipers and is unable to contact destroyers for help. They can advance only by bypassing points of strength, which results in a "progressive loss of control." Still, they join up with Dawson, who has similar difficulties moving on the same objective. G Company edges up on Colleville, which is dominated by a stone, Norman church. The German artillery observer in its steeple and three men inside the church are killed at the cost of an American private. Outside, Dawson is shot twice and evacuated. G Company battles a full German company occupying impregnable stone houses. Toward noon, Maj. William Washington, of 2nd Battalion, 16th Regiment, and Spaulding's platoon arrive. By nightfall, Spaulding is nearly out of ammunition and still surrounded. Washington spends the night hauling 57mm antitank weapons up the cliff. At first light, they see two GIs leading fifty POWs toward their lines. These Polish-Americans had been captured but during the night had talked the Polish conscripts guarding them into surrendering.

Casualties in East Red sector are frightful, including every officer and over half the NCOs in F Company. Other platoons lose almost as many. Survivors all have "Lord was I lucky" stories to tell, like the man whose ID bracelet snags on a branch, then the man who passes him is shot in the face. The sight of Americans on the bluff and POWs processing downward heartens everyone. Easy Red at noon is still unsafe. Machine gun fire has let up, but mortar and artillery fire has increased, albeit with lessened accuracy as observation posts are eliminated. Reinforcements come ashore, chiefly from the 115th Regiment. In the ebb tide, LCIs cannot come ashore, so they transfer troops onto LCVPs for shuttling ashore. The Germans figure this out and fire on transfer points. One LCT scheduled to land at 0830 is still circling at 1130; the skipper aborts two beach runs before being ordered by a prowling control officer not to come back out without unloading. The skipper refuses to go in as shallow as the GIs want and six of seven trucks sink. Pvt. Eldon Wiehe makes it ashore, panics, cries until no more tears come, then gets himself together, picks up a rifle, and becomes infantry. He sees two bulldozers pile sand on pillboxes to put them out of action. By noon, Easy Red still looks like a catastrophe but is not. GIs are making progress at E-1. Dozers have made a gap in the dune line and are making it ready for vehicles to pass. Colleville is under attack, and the bluffs right and left have been taken. At 1309, Gerow sends his first favorable report to Bradley, who believes the situation remains grave, but Omaha Beach need not be abandoned.

Chapters 24-25

Chapters 24-25 Summary and Analysis

"Struggle for the High Ground" looks inland, at the battles for the villages of Vierville, St.-Laurent, and Colleville. Lt. John Raaen (Chapter 22) is the 22-year-old son of an Army officer and 1943, graduate of West Point and beginning a lifelong military career. On D-Day he learns important lessons: 1) give frightened men something specific to do to settle their nerves; 2) do not trust Intelligence; and 3) do not make assumptions about terrain until you see it yourself. Norman hedgerows are nothing like English jumping barriers. They grow 6-12 feet high above dense roots sunk in mounds. They cannot be passed through. Farmers access them through gaps opposite which the Germans typically locate a camouflaged MG-42 to cut down entering GIs. Eventually, Americans learn to blast through using TNT or tanks, but have no tactics - and no tanks - ready on D-Day. Raaen sets up his company CP outside Vierville under artillery fire. He learns to tell from the sound of incoming rounds whether to duck.

The 5th Ranger Battalion's objective is Pointe-du-Hoc, past Vierville on the coast road. Col. Schneider (see Chapter 22) sends a patrol to link up with others coming up the Les Moulins draw. *Ost* troops obey Rommel's doctrine of "standing and fighting in place," and most Germans do not yet realize the battle is lost. They should be able to resupply as in World War I, but Allied naval and air superiority prevents this. The Germans miss the opportunity to sweep the Americans away while the Americans are scattered and lack heavy weapons. The leaderless Germans fight effectively, inflict casualties, harass, and delay the Americans from reaching their objectives - but they cannot win the battle.

Schneider intends to skirt Vierville and head for Pointe-du-Hoc, but is held up by machine guns. Three times, he tries to outflank them, only to encounter new ones. C Company, 116th, moves through without opposition, meets B Company, and the combined force takes the coastal road to Pointe-du-Hoc. About 500 meters out, they are pinned down by machine gun fire for hours. Loss of momentum becomes a psychological problem, as is the exhilaration of reaching relative calm after the hellish beach. Exhaustion and the availability of wine, along with absence of radios, lack of unit cohesion, and the terrain contribute to the loss of momentum. Individuals draw sniper fire while clumps bring mortars and artillery shells. GIs gain only fleeting glimpses of the Germans. Isolated men run, fight, hide like bandits, joining, and separating at will.

Col. Canham (see Chapter 17), CO of the 116th, sets up his HQ at Chateau de Vaumicel, half a kilometer from Vierville and commandeers a platoon of Rangers to serve as his guard. The chateau is full of Germans, twenty-five of whom surrender. The situation is tenuous. Some Rangers want to shoot the prisoners before dark, but humanity prevails, and they spend a very quiet night under the muzzles of a BAR. At 1400, Ranger Lt. Jay Mehaffey uses eight POWs as human shields past a sniper who has killed one of his men. Completely isolated, Canham cannot stop a naval bombardment called in erroneously by a signalman on LCI 538, who believes the

Vierville steeple is an observation post. They take forty rounds, killing sixty-four GIs. Come nightfall, the Vierville area is the weak point in the beachhead, surrounded, dug in, and out of communication. The beach is still under heavy artillery fire, and few reinforcements come ashore after 1200. Dawson and Mehaffy both fail to take out machine gun nests and have to dig in for the night, short of their objectives and less than a mile from the beach. GIs are "fatigued, demoralized, disorganized, and utterly incapable of concerted military action," but so are the Germans. The German 352nd Division holds both sides of the road and the main crossroad. Americans are slowed by rumors white tape markers in minefields are inaccurate. As their ammunition runs low, some take chances. By late afternoon, E-1 is open to tracked vehicles; by 2000 hours, tanks roll up and destroy sniper and machine gun nests. Unfortunately, naval shells also pour in, inflicting more "friendly fire" casualties. When the barrage lifts, the infantry storms St.-Laurent's stone houses and holds parts of town at nightfall. Elements of five battalions have fought all afternoon over a square mile of territory but failed to take it. This speaks well for the single German company opposing them.

Between 1900 and 2030, generals Huebner and Gerow come ashore, suggesting the beachhead is secure. Men of the 29th and 1st divisions are isolated in eighteen pockets around three village, lacking heavy armaments or communications. The Germans have inflicted heavy casualties - 2,400 out of 55,000, a horrendous 7.2% loss to put 34,000 troops into battle. The 352nd Division has lost 1,200 - 20% of its total strength - and failed to stop the assault on the beach. Pvt. Gockel's experience is typical of what the Germans endure on D-Day. At 0830, he thinks the battle is won, until Americans continue to land, bypass WN62, and attack from the rear. At noon, he receives half rations and no supplies or reinforcements. Gockel is shot through the left hand, receives first aid, and flees advancing GIs, who storm the trenches. He links up with other survivors but cannot reach the hospital in Bayeux, thanks to damage from earlier bombardments. RAF fighters strafe their convoy and the lightly wounded continue on foot. Bayeux has been evacuated and they continue to Vire, which is still in flames after the bombings. They spend the night drinking in a farmhouse. WN 62's three unwounded Germans are taken prisoner; they know defeat lies ahead. The German failure at Omaha Beach comes from attempting to defend everything everywhere and from Kraiss' mistakes. First he commits reserves to a "wild-goose chase" for paratroopers, who are actually only a handful of misdropped men from the 101st. Realizing his error at 0550, he waits until 0735 to recommit the reserves to Omaha; at 0835 he sends two battalions to Gold Beach, losing the ability to strike a "telling blow" on either beach. They arrive late because they are shot at and bombed from the air. Kraiss both receives and gives bad information. Until shortly before midnight, he assures superiors the invasion is under control. He begs General Marcks to send reinforcements within 48 hours but is told none are available, and he must hold every inch of ground. The 352nd is "frittered away" and the Atlantic Wall is breached. Beyond it, the Germans have only hedgerows. The sheer weight of the American assault contributes to the German's situation, but so does leadership by many men from private to colonel.

"'It Was Just Fantastic': Afternoon on Omaha Beach" continues the scenarios from Easy Red. Most German pillboxes are out of action, although snipers sneak back through trenches to resume fire. Artillery from inland and the flanks fire into a beach so jammed

it is hard to miss hitting something. Captain Oscar Rich, a spotter for the 5th Field Artillery Battalion, lands at 1300 with his dissembled L-5 plane. Everyone on the beach appears calm from the LCT circling, looking for an opening. He helps the shaken skipper navigate. The jeeps go ashore without his plane, but Rich gets a bulldozer to tow it in. He is left with an airplane but no mechanic or transportation to the E-1 Draw. The calm, young beachmaster, who is keeping remarkable order, gives him an unused jeep. Rich slowly assembles the plane, with GIs stealing a few minutes to tinker before being ordered back to assignments. Only after dark is he ready to fly. Rich is lucky not to have been hit because the Germans are targeting the exits. Two general officers reconnoiter the beach until they decide it is "desirable to leave."

Lt. Vince Schlotterbeck of the 5th ESB cruises out of range of the German guns for seven hours, looking for an opportunity to go in. Like most skippers, he has cut loose the barrage balloon that makes a good target and is not needed because the *Luftwaffe* is absent. Schlotterbeck sees only two or three dependable tanks ashore. At 1830, his LCT makes the first of several runs for shore, hitting sandbars and finally getting stuck. When the tide floats them lose, they drive in at 2000. Schlotterbeck is glad he has prepared himself mentally to see horrors. He heads up the bluff as demolition teams ignore the shelling to destroy obstacles, expand gaps and add new ones. Engineers, meanwhile, open the exits for vehicles, blowing antitank barriers, filling antitank ditches, clearing mines, and laying down wire mesh to provide traction in sand. By 1300, E-1 is open to traffic, but the crossroad at St.-Laurent is still in German hands, so engineers rush to create a detour by 1600. Vaunted American artillery does not participate on D-Day, except for one mission. Over fifty tanks are lost. Of the 2,400 tons of supplies scheduled to reach Omaha Beach, only 100 tons get ashore and much of it is ruined. Little reaches the bluffs for several days.

Craft continue arriving carrying in tanks and infantry. Lt. Rockwell (see Chapter 14) makes a second trip ashore at 1400. A mine damages his landing gear, making it impossible to lower the ramp, but he discharges his passengers, a medical detachment for whom he feels sorry. Ernest Hemingway, a correspondent for *Collier's* comes ashore in the seventh wave, aboard an LCVP commanded by LTJG Robert Anderson. Hemingway characterizes the Channel as full of "bathtubs, gondolas, and ships of all kinds," mostly circling rather than heading ashore. The *Texas* fires overhead, impressing the author with the sound of "whole railway trains" flying through the sky. Hemingway helps Anderson navigate to Fox Red, which is sustaining intense fire. As they circle, Hemmingway sees infantry climbing the bluff, slowly, like Atlas or a "tired pack train." Destroyers are pounding pillboxes. Anderson and twenty-three LCVPs from the *Dorothy Dix* reach the beach, while six are lost. Hemmingway praises the Germans' defenses and the sailors' skill in nevertheless taking the beach.

Captain James Roberts, Gerow's aide, goes ashore at 1700, in a panic, walks shaken among men crying for morphine, and climbs the bluff to set up V Corps Command Post north of St.-Laurent. With no radio and no one from HQ Company there, he admires the "fantastic" view of the Channel and sets up a pup tent for Gerow, who arrives at 2100, and is concerned about communications and a possible armored counterattack. Military planners do not like generals this close to the front. As darkness falls, Roberts eats his

first food of the day and sleeps in a ditch. There is no German counterattack because Rommel's plans are never put in motion. The Germans are completely surprised, thanks to Fortitude, so the panzers are north and east of the Seine; they are confused by scattered air drops, cut telephone lines, and the absence of their own commanders. The German command structure is dysfunctional because Hitler and his generals distrust one another. Only old Rundstedt responds properly, knowing intuitively that the airborne landings are too large to be a feint; seaborne forces must be coming, and panzers must be in place to meet them. To save time, he orders them to move out and then asks permission from the OKW. At 0730, Rundstedt is told he must countermand the order pending Hitler's decision.

At 1600, Hitler awakens and gives permission. He is elated, claiming the Allies are landing precisely where expected. Goebbels is happy because it will end the months of waiting, which has left the Nazis paralyzed while bombings daily deplete their petrol stores. The Allies had been untouchable in England; now they are within range. Hitler also orders his V-1s launched on London, but deploying the wildly inaccurate "vengeance" weapons take until June 12. Had they been targeted on Normandy, they might have made a difference, but London, a non-military target, is Hitler's obsession. On D-Day, Hitler also mismanages his tactical forces and interferes with commanders. By contrast, Roosevelt, Churchill, and even Eisenhower leave decision-making to people closest to the action. Eisenhower rises at 0700 on D-Day, makes an appearance at SHAEF operations, but issues no orders. He is disturbed by news from Omaha. Mostly, he paces and grins and retires early for a good night's sleep.

At dusk, intermittent fire continues; men are dug in, and alarms are few. Lt. Henry Seitzler, a forward observer for the U.S. 9th Air Force is above Omaha, even though he is not needed until the third day. Without assignment, he concentrates on remaining alive (having no replacement). He joins others raiding the pantry of a burned-out LCI to "pig out." A cup of Nescafy (a diuretic) causes him problems, since anyone who moves after dark is shot. In the morning, Pvt. Robert Healey and a friend return to the beach to recover their abandoned packs and the cigarettes they hold in waterproof bags. They are shocked to see the volume of debris floating in the surf. Healey is struck by the sight of a young soldier beside whose dead hand bobs Cornelia Otis Skinner's *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay.* This expresses the ordeal of D-Day: the young GIs believe they are immortal and that they are doing a good thing by ridding Europe of Nazism.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary and Analysis

D-Day's focus shifts in "The World Holds Its Breath: D-Day on the Home Fronts." Three "teenage cowboys" in Helena, Montana, are excused for "boisterous bad behavior" in the Mecca Cafy because everyone knows they are shipping out and the radio reports D-Day has begun. Diners sit silently, listen and wonder. During the American Civil War and World War I, Americans get scant information long after-the-fact. Newspapers publish endless lists of the dead. In World War II, everyone listens to the radio but receives little detail. Film from the battlefields is closely censored. People wait and pray Western Union does not knock at their door.

Most Americans are involved in the war effort by farming, working in defense plants or volunteering. They pray they have done their part well. Higgins sends his employees a message about the work of their hands, hearts, and heads being tested. Defense industry workers are grateful to have good-paying jobs (being children of the Depression) and sacrifice their daily routines to make the invasion possible through extensive over-time work. Poly Crow cares for her son by day, works ten-hour nights building LSTs, buys bonds, does volunteer work and shares her apartment. Tens of thousands of young women do likewise becoming "quickie" teenage brides, who stand before the preacher with a GI wanting sex before going overseas. They become women quickly, travel alone (or with infants), become proficient at everything men normally do and write upbeat letters to their husbands. Many join the strictly-segregated women's auxiliaries to the armed services. They are the butt of cruel jokes, performing non-combat tasks that Eisenhower says are critical to victory.

The official Nazi news agency first breaks news of the invasion, and the Associated Press picks up their story. The *New York Times* prints only the headline overnight, and the networks interrupt musical programs with flash announcements. Commentators are careful to suggest that the Nazis may be tricking the French Resistance into revealing itself, but SHAEF soon issues a brief communiquy and sends to New York a recording of Eisenhower reading the order of the day in a rich, resonant voice. This recording is played over loudspeakers to the departing armada as well. NBC reports the 101st Airborne's departure and eyewitness reports from offshore of Normandy. No news comes from the beaches. People listen raptly, but most of what goes on the air is repetitious "idiot babble" by commentators who know little French geography and have no military savvy. Anxious Americans want to know about casualties, but the Office of War Information (OWI) forbids disseminating this information . SHAEF speaks in broad generalities, lest Fortitude be compromised. Unable to give information, radio airs inspiration addresses by heads of state. President Roosevelt seeks to unite the nation in prayer, speaking of young men fighting and dying, not lusting for conquest but seeking to liberate others.

In prosperous, expensive New York City, crowds look up at the news ticker on Times Square for invasion news. Men cluster outside the Rialto Theatre, talking soberly. Broadway shuts down. Newspapers reserve space for piety and invasion news. Stores shut down, sporting events are cancelled, but Wall Street goes about its business. After two months of "invasion jitters," the New York Stock Exchange looks forward to limited re-conversion to civilian production. New Yorkers flock to the Civilian Defense Volunteer Office, and record numbers give blood. Mayor La Guardia tells reporters this is "the most exciting moment in our lives." The *New York Times* declares it "the hour for which we were born" and calls for prayers for "the boys," the country, and the cause of freedom and equality for which God creates man. North of the city, at West Point, Cadet John Eisenhower graduates. His mother learns about D-Day when a reporter phones her for a quote. The General sends a tongue-in-cheek telegram, apologizing for being busy and not able to attend graduation.

Throughout America, bells toll, including the Liberty Bell, last tolled in 1835. Everyone has an impulse to pray. Special services are held in every church and synagogue, and the pews are jammed. In Washington, DC, the commander of the last Allied Force in Europe, General John J. Pershing, is confident the sons of the men he led will be victorious. At the Capitol building, politicians go about their business. Tired, but smiling, the president holds an afternoon press conference, saying the invasion is on schedule and taking light losses. There is a long way to go and this is no time for overconfidence. Afterwards, Admiral King and General Marshall can tell him nothing he cannot hear over the radio.

In Bedford, VA, the local paper publishes a prayer by a local woman. With hundreds of members of "Old Company A" (of the 116th Regiment) serving in England - and perhaps by now Normandy - the county is uneasy about inevitable casualties. In July, the *Bulletin* reports their men win "high praise" on D-Day, but no fatality reports are available. Only on July 19, do fourteen families learn they have lost sons on June 6, but the editor observes they die "gallantly and unafraid." New Orleans fills its historic cathedral all day and evening. Canal Street stores sell war bonds and play patriotic music. The Red Cross collects record amounts of blood; bit parades are postponed until V-Day. Higgins reminds his employees not to let up until Japan is invaded. In Canada, the prime minister reports good progress to the House of Commons and the opposition says there can be no division of opinion this day. All members sing the *Marseillaise* and *God Save the King.* In Columbus, OH, the mayor orders all sirens and factor whistles to sound a call to prayer. Blood donations and factory production go up, absenteeism down, and the churches are full. The Red Cross is overwhelmed with volunteers. All ask "Am I doing enough?" In Milwaukee, WI, the blood donor center is overwhelmed. In Reno, NV, gambling dens close and divorces drop to ten percent of normal. In Cincinnati, OH, 450 airplane workers go on strike over racial integration, and the AFL president demands all workers consider themselves part of the invasion and stay on their jobs under all circumstances. In Birmingham, AL, the local AFL condemns as "inconceivable" a wildcat strike by steel miners. In Marietta, GA, police sirens and church bells sound at 3 AM - as soon as news from Europe arrives. In Missoula, MT, a hush falls as the news sinks in. In a Helena veterans' hospital, crippled soldiers rejoice, then contemplate, then fall silent. In Atlanta, GA, wounded German POWs laugh and

suggest their compatriots will let the Allies penetrate a few miles and then "pinch them off" using SS elite guards stationed in Paris. In Dallas, TX, patriotism runs high. Two new mothers name their daughters "Invasia" and "Dee Day."

Mollie Panter-Downes, the *New Yorker*'s reporter in London, says on June 4, that everyone is waiting for "extraordinary" day to come. She observes punts (boats) for rent have grown scarce and complains about censorship of weather news, resulting in farmers losing their berry and plum crops to frost. Unable to discuss the weather in pubs, patrons speculate about the invasion. On June 6, Panter-Downes reminds readers the British are getting even for Dunkirk. No one celebrates yet. Everyone is preoccupied in his or her own silence. Business is bad for taxi drivers, theaters, movie houses, and even pubs. Farmers who normally pray for gray skies for their hay's sake now ask for blue skies for their sons' sake. Women watching troop trains pass do not know whether to cheer or cry. King George VI, makes a broadcast to the nation, seeking in particular to strengthen and comfort mothers and wives. He asks everyone to pray for the "great crusade." The House of Commons goes about its business, awaiting Churchill's announced visit. He toys with his audience for fifteen minutes before giving a cheerful status report. He repeats this four hours later with greater detail. He lauds Eisenhower's courage and wisdom, claims (falsely) the Caen has been taken. Edward R. Murrow of CBS is frustrated, coordinating reports from many correspondents and reading announcements. He has little to pass to America. Reporters on the beaches cannot, of course, broadcast live. In the wee hours, Murrow plays a recording made by ABC's George Hicks aboard the *Ancon,* describing the armada at daybreak. With sounds of battle in the background, it is "the most widely listened-to account of the D-Day landings."

In Paris, the military governor declares over the radio that the Germans have orders to shoot any "bandits" who cooperate with the Allied forces. The Vichy prime minister tells countrymen to ignore Eisenhower's appeal for resistance, as this will plunge the nation into civil war. Marshal Pytain calls on the French to stand with the Germans against the Anglo-Saxons. Parisians listen a lot and speak little. All Frenchmen fear having their villages, farms, or cities become battlefields and are unwilling to gamble on which side will win. In the smaller cities in the south of France, people are more open about their feelings. A little girl screams the news at sunrise, and people drink an early-morning toast to liberation. Having heard news of the fall of Rome and the civilians killed by Allied bombings in northern France, American expatriates Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas notice German soldiers are atypically polite on June 6. The two women feel like singing Hallelujah and telephone coded "birthday" greetings to friends.

In Rome, the ongoing celebration deepens with the news about D-Day. Allied troops are given flowers and hidden British, French and American flags are waved. In Amsterdam, Anne Frank hears the news by wireless in her attic and records in her diary hopes the occupation of Europe will be broken, and she can return to school. In Moscow, crowds dance in the streets, declaring love for their American friends. Only after Stalin praises Eisenhower does *Pravda* dare comment enthusiastically on the invasion. In Berlin, people go about their duties. The radio broadcasts the Nazi line thanking God for

ending the "nerve war," and illogically urging Germans to save Germany from Red Army occupation by fighting in France.

Chapters 27-30

Chapters 27-30 Summary and Analysis

"'Fairly Stuffed with Gadgets': The British Opening Moves" begins the story of the British/ Canadian invasions. Two midget submarines, X20 and X23, cross the Channel two days early to be on target off Sword and Juno beaches to guide ashore tanks modified to clear mines, fill ditches, bridge larger gaps, blast holes in blockhouses, hurl pressurized flaming jets, provide traction in sand, and drag obstacles aside. Collectively, they are "Hobart's Funnies," named for the imaginative Maj. Gen. Percy Hobart. The British count heavily on these specialized tanks and are put off when Americans refuse to use them. Operating under the menacing code name "Gambit" ("throwing away the opening pawns"), the subs sit on the bottom except to check for coded word that the invasion is on. Crews grumble at the June 5 delay and at surfacing at 0500 in miserable weather with waves breaking over them. Still, they raise their masts and signal they are "on station." After the pyrotechnics, they cheer the DD tanks ashore before returning home. On target, thanks to the minisubs, the DDs are slow, cumbersome, and quickly passed by LCTs.

Their destination is a 30-km. stretch of sandy beach stretching from Ouistreham to Arromanches. Cliffs "here and there" are unsuitable for landing. The German radar installation atop one has been knocked out. Gold, Juno, and Sword are similar geographically to Utah but face resorts and homes from which the German must be flushed. Montgomery sets an overly optimistic goal of capturing Caen on D-Day but does so only six weeks later, when the Americans threaten to envelop the town to make the Carpiquet airfield as a forward base. Too much historical debate has taken place along nationalistic lines about the British delay, but the May 15 briefing makes Montgomery's intention clear. To keep the troops confident, he withholds news about the 21st Panzer Division's arrival and fails to modify plans accordingly. Beach obstacles like Utah's are formidable, but fewer, and inland the battlefields differ. Wilhelm Richter commands the German 716th Infantry Division, one-third *Ost* battalions, leaving him pessimistic about holding off an invasion. Strong points are too far apart and offer no depth. Reinforcements are too far away. The British attack before midnight by bombing a coastline more densely populated than Omaha and Utah, causing civilian suffering.

"Everything Was Well Ordered" focuses on the 50th Division at Gold Beach. UDTs and engineers hit at 0735, followed by tanks and infantry assault teams. Low tide comes an hour later than on the American beaches, allowing bombers and warships more time, but bombardments are generally inaccurate. Gold's sectors (west-to-east) are: Item, Jig, King, and Love, assigned respectively to the Devonshire, Hampshire, Doretshire, and East Yorkshire regiments of the Northumbrian (50th) Division, accompanied by light infantry, engineers, communication, artillery, and the famed 7th Armoured ("Desert Rats").

Landing at Jig, Lt. Pat Blamey drives a Sherman tank modified for a 25-pound cannon, which he fires steadily from twelve kilometers offshore to three. Snipers slow clearing the lanes by targeting UDT teams, and twenty LCTs hit mines, partly because of Royal Navy rules to "crunch over" everything "flat out." Seasick men race ashore, happy to face light resistance. Unloading goes like clockwork (as rehearsed), and Blamey moves inland to make room for the second wave. At Love, men abandon their "instrument of torture" 200 meters offshore in chest-high water, cross the seawall and coastal road, and hike to Crepon. The beachmaster for Item and Jig, lands at 0745 amidst "considerable fire." Germans wait at the seawall to surrender, but eastward, at Le Hamel, others fire from the safety of brick houses. With all British tanks lost, engineers cannot clear the exits, so the beachmaster suspends landings and obstacle clearance. German defenses fail by mid-afternoon, but the British fail to take advantage. Fortunately, the *Kamfgruppe Meyer* is on a wild-goose chase and Kraiss splits his remaining forces to defend Colleville as well. A single German tank stops one advance, which HMS *Belfast* will shell only if friendly infantry retreats, but their commander is too proud.

The 47th Royal Marine Commandos land in Item sector nearby, losing fifteen of sixteen landing craft to mines. Appearing dazed, the Germans offer so little fire that medics unload ammunition. The marines are to take Port-en-Bessin and link up with the Americans. En route they encounter at Longues-sur-Mer a state-of-the-art German observation post, unscathed by the predawn pounding and duels with Allied warships. It and two batteries to which it is linked are abandoned, and the third is pulverized by the luckiest and/or most accurate shot of the invasion. Civilians are overjoyed that the long-awaited liberation has arrived, and no one is killed or wounded in the softening up that St.-Cfme suffers, the British believing it is evacuated. By nightfall, the marines are ten kilometers inland, hooked up with the Canadians at Cruellty and poised to take Bayeux and N-13 next day. They put 25,000 men ashore at a cost of 400 casualties.

"Payback: The Canadians at Juno Beach" shifts eastward and clarifies multiple references to "Dieppe," the badly planned and executed amphibious raid on Aug. 19, 1942, by the 2nd Canadian Division on the port one-hundred kilometers from Le Havre. Casualties are seventy-five percent in six hours. This national disaster demands "payback" on Juno. Couseulles-sur-Mer, the best-defended point on the British/Canadian coastline, bristles with eleven heavy, and nine medium batteries; only two of which are fully reinforced and ringed by barbed wire and minefields, both to protect the under-aged or over-aged and disabled defenders and to keep them from disserting. They are no match for Canada's young, tough and well-trained force, which outnumbers them six-to-one. "Volunteer" Sapper Josh Honan discovers he has the worst job imaginable: preceding the first wave and clearing beach obstacles. During the crossing to Mike sector, members of the Regina Rifle Regiment sharpen weapons and play poker, pausing as a bagpiper plays the touching "We No' Come Back Again."

Scheduled to land at 0754, the Canadians are held up by heavy seas. Assured that all German defenses are *kaput* (while only fourteen percent of the bunkers are) and not realizing the German guns are pre-sighted on the beach, the Canadians take silence as a good sign. Teller mines claim over half of the landing craft (and sink a quarter). Honan

begins disarming the mines until German guns open up on the infantry, and the tide rises too high. He leaves off work until the tide again recedes. A DD goes ashore, drops its skirts (flotation), and opens fire - unfortunately, on fellow Canadians.

Chance, not planning, determines whether tanks arrive before, with or after the infantry and UDT men. Casualties are as dreadful as the first wave at Omaha, and men survive by following tanks. Germans are shaken by swimming tanks, which can destroy concrete blockhouses with point-blank fire. Through it all, pipers with the Canadian Scottish Regiment pipe away. Pvt. G. W. Levers keeps a detailed diary that shows how like Omaha Juno is, except that it has far more tanks. At Omaha one in nineteen Americans is killed, while at Juno, Canadians fall at a rate of one in eighteen. On both beaches, the assault teams have a fifty percent chance of falling. Hobart's Funnies perform their tasks, including using two thirty-foot bridges and a sunken Sherman tank as a center support to bridge the massive crater created by a naval shell. By 0915, infantrymen are crossing it to assault the Germans in town. Few publications tell the truth about the Winnipeg infantry's bravery.

Every Canadian assault platoon is assigned a sector to attack. Some, such as Company B, Regina Rifles, encounter no resistance, while Company A requires DD tanks to take out the heavy guns it faces. It loses twenty-four men clearing its front, while B Company, Queen's Own Regiment, loses sixty-five men - nearly half - before a tank's 25-lb. petards penetrate a casement that resists all other efforts. As at Omaha, Germans use the trenches to return to cleared positions. St.-Aubin is not fully secured until 1800. By 1200, the entire Canadian 3rd Division is ashore and passes inland without seeing German tanks. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders lands at 1100 with orders to let nothing keep them from capturing the Carpiquet airport, fifteen kilometers inland. They get nowhere close, because congestion delays their start until 1400; teatime is mandatory, farmhouses must be looted for German memorabilia, high wheat requires frequent dropping into ditches, a possible counteroffensive makes digging in prudent. When 1st Hussar tanks reach the Caen-Bayeux railway, they gain the distinction of being the *only* Allied unit to reach its final objective on D-Day. It has to pull back, however, when the infantry fails to keep up. Refueled and restocked, it is ready to return next day. To the west, the Canadian Scottish link up with the British 50th Division at Creully. Between them, they have 900 tanks and armored vehicles, 240 field guns, 280 antitank guns and 4,000 tons of stores.

The Canadians fail to reach their objectives because the objectives are too optimistic for green troops, and they are late hitting the beaches and hampered by tides, winds and obstacles. The bombardments are disappointing, and the schedule too tight. Momentum is lost as men feel they have done their part. The enemy they face makes them optimistic because they are elderly Slavs, rather than fanatical Nazis. The Canadians know, however, that the crack 21st Panzer Division lurks nearby, so they dig in early. On the whole, however, the Canadian 3rd Division ends the day deeper into France than anyone else, having faced stronger opposition than anyone except the Americans on Omaha. Dieppe is repaid.

"'An Unforgettable Sight:' The British at Sword Beach" examines the last of the British/ Canadian sectors, stretching from Lion-sur-Mer to Ouistreham. Inland lie vacation homes and tourist areas. There are the usual beach defenses, depending mostly on the 75mm guns at Merville, taken out by the U.S. 6th Airborne, and the ineffective 155mm guns at Le Havre, which foolishly spend the morning dueling with HMS *Warspite* rather than targeting Sword Beach. Mortars and machine guns pound the beach; antitank ditches and mines slow traffic inland, and massive concrete walls block the town streets. Sword's sectors (right-to-left) are Peter, Queen, and Roger, assaulted, respectively, by the South Lancashire, Suffolk Regiment, and East Yorkshire regiments, supported by DD tanks. UDT and engineers deal with the obstacles. As they approach the beach, Brigadier Lord Lovat has his piper play Highland reels and Major C. K. King, reads lines from Shakespeare's *Henry V.* The DD tanks are too slow to land first as intended, so LCTs and LCA are first ashore at 0726. They meet sporadic fire, lighter than at Juno or Omaha but much heavier than at Utah or Gold. Casualties are high, but the majority reach the dunes and begin suppressing fire. Tanks offer protection crossing the beach. Flail tanks systematically clear mines from beach and road. Sniper and machine gun fire from Lion-sur-Mer remains a problem, hampering the second wave. Major Kenneth Ferguson's orders are to take Caen, but he first helps the commandos in Lion, calling in support from the Polish destroyer *Slazak,* which nearly empties its magazines before breaking off. The Royal Marines thank the skipper for "sav[ing] their bacon."

French commandos behave as if they are enjoying a Sunday afternoon on the beach. Led by Philip Kieffer, these evacuees from Dunkirk or escapees from Vichy France are in a "gay mood," heading home. The commandos move "with dash and determination" to attack well-fortified Germans at Riva-Bella and Ouistreham. Telephone poles replace guns the Germans have moved three kilometers inland from the battery, and "a lot of chaps" die of fire from the original position because of observers in the medieval tower. The tower withstands every assault, and the British continue taking casualties until they give up and head for the Pegasus Bridge. En route, they feast on a field of strawberries, something the Germans never do. Then they brew a bit of tea. Captain Kenneth Wright, intelligence officer for No. 4 Commando, writes his parents about his experiences. He is left feeling numb after a mortar hits nearby at 0745 and wades fifty exhausting meters to a beach strewn with men waiting to move towards the exits. The French are "happy and full of beans." Wright drinks some liberated Calvados (apple brandy), which eases the pain, while awaiting evacuation. He lies exposed on a stretcher for twenty-four hours before he begins the return journey to an English hospital. Private Harold Pickersgill's "chaps" tell him about seeing on Sword Beac, a beautiful eighteen-year-old French girl with a Red Cross armband, helping the wounded. Pickersgill never believes the story until 1964, when he meets her, the wife of another D-Day veteran. She comes to retrieve a "bathing costume" given her by her late twin, is admitted by the Germans because of the armband, but forbidden to leave by the English. She makes herself useful for two days. British veterans still visit Jacqueline Thornton on D-Day anniversaries to thank her.

Private Harry Nomburg is part of 3 Troop, No. 10 Commando, the Jewish brigade specially trained to interrogate POWs. He wades ashore proudly in his green beret

carrying a Tommie gun and overfilled magazine that falls out because of its weight. Firing is lighter than he expects. Nomburg is humbled, learning the Germans know more about the war than he. Corporal Peter Masters, a Vienna Jew in the same troop, also loses his overloaded magazine, but he lugs ashore a horse-load of equipment. They encounter the very passive survivors of No. 2 Platoon, cut down by mortars and snipers. They crawl toward their assembly point, with sniper fire becoming increasingly accurate, until passing tanks take the Germans out. Lord Lovat walks about calmly encouraging people that this is "no different than an exercise." Lovat assigns Masters to interrogate several POWs, who turn out to be talkative Poles who understand French, at which Lovat is more fluent. Miffed, Masters heads to Colleville-sur-Mer, a shambles after the bombardments. Most of the civilians are still dazed, but one young man pastes up welcoming posters, obviously long prepared. Captain Robinson finds Masters a nuisance and eventually Robinson sends Masters forward to scout - actually to draw fire. Confronting the enemy, Masters recalls Cary Grant in the film *Gunga Din*, and in German warns the Germans that their only chance is to surrender. After an awkward silence, Robinson leads a bayonet charge. While Masters interrogates a wounded Austrian teen, a British corporal asks how to say "I'm sorry" in German, so he can apologize to the first person he has ever shot. Next day, that corporal dies leading a charge. Passing tanks clear additional snipers, and the commandos head toward the bridge, arriving at 1300 and linking up with airborne troops.

On the right flank of Sword, the Germans launch their only serious counterattack at 1600. Colonel Oppeln commanding the 22nd Regiment, 21st Panzer Division, arrives late because he is ordered at 0900 to attack paratroopers east of the Orne and is also hampered by Allied fighter planes. At 1200, he is ordered to pass through Caen and attack the gap between the Canadians and British. At 1400, he links up with elite, well-equipped Grenadiers, and General Marcks puts the fate of Germany on Oppeln's shoulders. The Grenadiers reach the beach unopposed at 2000, but the alert Allies hold off the supporting panzers. Oppeln orders surviving tanks to dig in. Late afternoon, Oppeln finds General Richter lamenting his defeat. The British put 29,000 men ashore at Sword, suffer 630 casualties, inflict many more and take prisoners. They fall five kilometers short of their overly-optimistic objectives. Toward dusk, Commander Curtis proudly surveys a beach strewn with landing craft now stranded on obstacles. Prefabricated Mulberry harbors are being towed for placement the next day.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary and Analysis

"'My God, We've Done It': The British Airborne on D-Day" concludes the story of those who

take and hold the vulnerable left flank, between the Dives and Orne. The Germans have more than 1,000 panzers, including new Tigers, which outclass the Allies' tanks. These are all tied up, but antiquated French armaments are available and provide greater firepower than the holed-up 6th Airborne. At dawn, Howard's D Company is barely holding onto Pegasus Bridge, caught under fire by an enlivened German garrison. At 0900, three tall generals march smartly down the road in a show of "sheer bravado" that inspires the troops. Maj. Gen. Richard Gale, commanding the 6th Division, believes it unfair to ask his weary troops for help, but gives it to face the French-made tanks. At 1300, the first commandos arrive, followed by Lord Lovat *(cum* bagpiper). After tearful reunions, Lovat ignores advice about snipers and marches his men sharply. After twelve are killed by headshots, many don helmets. At 1400, the Germans are finally allowed to attack the bridge, but are pounded by Allied aircraft and naval fire and abandon the attempt. Eastward, parachutists are still fighting at 1400, having begun at 0330. Russians in *Wehrmacht* uniforms fight well, inspired by threats by NCOs that they will be shot if captured by the Allies. The village falls by 1900, and the victors give away their cigarettes, expecting to be evacuated to England quickly. They spend three months in Normandy.

As the sun sets, a wounded Major Nigel Taylor drinks champagne offered by a medic. British aircraft fly over bringing massive reinforcements and supplies by parachute and glider. Heavy equipment rolls up the road shortly afterwards. They land weapons-ready, but encounter no resistance. Their first action is to relieve themselves. After sunset, forty DC-3s from the RAF 233rd Squadron leave England with 116 tons of supplies, but "trigger-happy" Royal Navy gunners open fire. Only 25 tons are recovered. In England, Capt. John Tillett awaits a flight to Normandy with his prized pigeons, to pass news home should radios fail. "Some chaps" kill and eat them before he can board. His Horsa lands in a "splintering landing" and Tillett finds himself face-to-face with a terrified German, who surrenders. Within minutes, Tillett also faces a tank with a swastika painted on its side. It is British; the chalk symbol marks a panzer kill earlier that day. A major distributes copies of the London *Evening Standard* headlined, "SKYMEN LAND IN EUROPE." The Americans later criticize the British for not pushing into Caen while the Germans are disorganized, but the Britons are satisfied to have "done it!"

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary and Analysis

"When Can Their Glory Fade?" takes its title from Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and serves as the book's epilogue. Unloading ends on all beaches at 2200. Nearly 175,000 Allied troops are ashore at a cost of 4,900 casualties. The front covers ninety kilometers, minus a few gaps the Germans cannot exploit. Rommel is right: the Allies can keep him from rushing resources to the beaches, while they can bring in all they need. The Allies penetrate a mere 2-10 kilometers inland but they are through the Atlantic Wall everywhere, which took four years to construct and holds in some cases only an hour. It is one of history's greatest blunders. The Allies' mistakes - sending airborne at night, using bomber and warship fleets ineffectively, and heavily emphasizing the need to crack the Atlantic Wall so that weary troops believe their job is over at the point they should be pushing hardest to exploit the Germans' confusion. Failure to prepare men and equipment to fight in hedgerows is "an egregious error."

Still, the Germans do a much worse job by obeying a hopeless command structure, using POWs in trenches, failing to mount an all-out attack on the armada by the *Luftwaffe* (the Allies' greatest fear and Goering's intention) and *Kriegsmarine*, and mistargeting the V-1s, once available. Worse yet, Germany's political blunders turn potential assets in the East and in France into liabilities. Individual German soldiers fight bravely, but officers of all ranks pathetically avoid the kind of battlefield initiative that Allied commanders at all levels routinely accept. The Allies expect retaliation by land or air, but nothing comes. At 2300, a lone Luftwaffe reconnaissance plane calmly overflies the armada and departs through a curtain of flak. Pvt. Robert Zafft feels he has "made it up the hill of manhood;" Sgt. John Ellery feels ten feet tall, walking "in the company of very brave men;" Admiral Ramsay believes progress has been made and thanks God, and paratrooper Richard Winters, having prayed since the tarmac to survive D-Day, prays to survive D-Day plus one. Eisenhower, on D-Day plus twenty years, describes as unreal seeing people frolicking on Omaha Beach, where 2,000 paid the price on a single day to preserve this way of life and to set the world free.

Characters

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Erwin Rommel

Omar Bradley

Adolf Hitler

Lt. Arthur Jahnke

George Marshall

Bernard Law ("Monty") Montgomery

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

Gerd von Rundstedt

Harrison Summers

Objects/Places

The Atlantic Wall

Adolf Hitler's vision for a successful defense against an Anglo-Allied invasion from the West, the Atlantic Wall is a shoreline copy of the Maginot Line, a "continuous belt of interlocking fire emanating from bombproof concrete structures," impervious to attack by Allied air and naval bombardment. The French coastline provides natural defenses, which German engineers strengthen. By D-Day, 6.5 million of a planned 11 million mines are laid, along with obstacles on every beach suitable for amphibious landing. Gun emplacements impervious to naval bombardment are arranged to allow deadly crossfire across every beach. Barbed wire and antitank ditches finish the beach defenses. Inland, where geographically appropriate, the countryside is flooded, civilians uprooted and buildings and forests torn down to halt the Allies. The goal is that any GI surviving long enough to reach cover will be wounded or paralyzed with fear. Rommel lacks resources for fixed defenses inland, but hedgerow country behind some beaches proves ideal for defenders. Had the elite units designated to provide back up been in place and had the *Luftwaffe* deployed jet aircraft, the Atlantic Wall would have held longer. To draw the Allied landing to Pas-de-Calais, where his defenses were strongest, Hitler installed V-1 and V-2 launch sites there. The Atlantic Wall, which took four years to construct, is one of history's greatest blunders.

Gold Beach

The landing area of the British 50th Division, Gold is the easternmost of the British/Canadian beaches on the Bay of the Seine, adjacent to the U.S. V Corps on Omaha Beach. Extensive beach obstacles and low dunes defend Gold Beach. A row of French vacation homes is torn down to improve defensive fire. Casements are scattered along the beach, but defenses have less depth than at Omaha Beach. UDTs and engineers hit at 0735, followed by tanks and infantry assault teams. Low tide comes an hour later than on the American beaches, allowing bombers and warships more time, but bombardments are generally inaccurate. Gold's sectors (west-to-east) are: Item, Jig, King, and Love, assigned respectively to the Devonshire, Hampshire, Doretshire, and East Yorkshire regiments of the Northumbrian (50th) Division, accompanied by light infantry, engineers, communication, artillery and the famed 7th Armored ("Desert Rats").

Higgins Boats

Officially known as "Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel" (LCVP), Higgins boats carry more American soldiers ashore in World War II than all other craft combined. They are a modification of Andrew Jackson Higgins' shallow-draft "Eureka" boat designed for oil explorations in the swamps of Louisiana. In 1939, Higgins purchases and stores the entire crop of Philippine mahogany to be ready for war production. He enters the design

competition, but the Navy wants nothing to do with the loud-mouthed Irishman, who builds wooden boats on the Gulf. The Marines love his design, which facilitates rapid landing and advance on the beach. Bobbing about, losing their breakfasts, many troops curse "that s.o.b. Higgins" for inventing the craft, but Eisenhower states Higgins is "the man who won the war for us."

Juno Beach

The landing area of the Canadian 3rd Division on the Bay of the Seine, Juno is the center of the British/Canadian beaches. Extensive beach obstacles and low dunes defend Juno Beach. A row of French vacation homes is torn down to improve defensive fire. Casements are scattered along the beach, but defenses have less depth than at Omaha Beach. Couseulles-sur-Mer, the best-defended point on the British/Canadian coastline, bristles with eleven heavy and nine medium batteries; only two fully reinforced and ringed by barbed wire and minefields both to protect the under-aged or over-aged and disabled defenders and to keep them from deserting. They are no match for Canada's young, tough, well trained force, which outnumbers the defenders six-to-one. Chance, not planning, determines whether tanks arrive before, with or after the infantry and UDT men. Some land dry-shod, while others wade in from water up to their necks. Casualties are as dreadful as the first wave at Omaha, and men survive by following tanks. Canadians fall at a rate of one in eighteen.

Omaha Beach

The landing area of the U.S. 29th and 1st Infantry at Calvados, Omaha lies east of Utah Beach and west of the British/Canadian landing areas. Omaha has a 150-meter tidal flat before a bank of shingle offers attackers some cover. German riflemen and machine gunners cover the beach exits from fire trenches located in the lower, middle and top of the bluffs. Hundreds of "Tobruks" dot the bluffs, connected underground. The Germans have twelve strong points from which to enfilade Omaha Beach and twelve more positions up the bluff that can hit every place on the beach. The eight concrete casements can withstand naval gunfire and are vulnerable only to infantry attack, against which they are protected. More mines and barbed wire face any GIs who survive to reach the shingle. Between the high-water mark and the bluffs are more mines and barbed wire. The exit roads are protected against tanks and trucks. Six 155-mm guns at Pointe-du-Hoc can hit offshore ships on Omaha and Utah beaches. Inland, hedgerows are relied on to slow the Allies. Until 1309, Gen. Bradley, commanding the 1st Army, believes Omaha may have to be abandoned.

Planning is elaborate and precise. In a linear attack, the 116th Regiment, 29th Division is to land to the right (west), supported by C Company; 2nd Ranger Battalion, and the 16th Regiment, 1st Division, lands on the left (east). There are eight sectors (Charlie, Dog Green, Dog White, Dog Red, Easy Green, Easy Red, Fox Green, and Fox Red). Both regiments land two battalions in the first waves in a "column of companies." The infantry is to be preceded by DD tanks, UDT units, and Army engineers; the infantry's

task is to suppress German fire so obstacles can be blown up and safe paths ashore marked. Following waves are to observe tight schedules, with vehicles heading inland towards objectives within two hours. Nothing works as planned. Except for Company A, 116th, no unit lands where it should. Winds and tides shift landing craft leftward. At least 200 boats swamp. The first wave arrives seasick, exhausted and confused; additionally, they believe German strong points have been knocked out. The Germans merely hold their fire until the ramps drop and then find targets aplenty because misplaced landings have grouped the GIs. The first fifteen minutes on Omaha is "an unmitigated disaster," but by nightfall, it is secured, at a cost of 2,000 American lives—one in nineteen. The German failure comes from their attempt to defend everything everywhere.

Operation Fortitude

"Operation Fortitude" is the Allies' elaborate plan to convince Hitler that Overlord is but a feint and twice as powerful as it actually is. The Germans are masters of radio deception, but the Double Cross System has prepared them to accept spy data as authentic and accurate. "Fortitude North," which leaks hints of action against U-boat bases in Norway, draws thirteen army divisions away from France, while the far larger and more elaborate "Fortitude South" aims at convincing Hitler the main thrust is at the Pas-de-Calais. It creates the First U.S. Army Group (FUSAG), a patchwork of real and "notational" (imaginary) forces, complete with dummy landing craft, tanks, and oil docks in Dover. The Double Cross System talks of intense military activity, and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, who the Germans respect, is named FUSAG commander. In May the Germans believe that the Allies have 89 divisions, not 47, and that they have enough landing craft to bring 20 divisions ashore; whereas, the Allie can barely bring ashore six. To prevent the Germans from learning the truth, Eisenhower badgers Churchill into banning visitors from southern England and removing privilege from diplomatic communications. Ultra intercepts culled weekly to produce an executive summary of the "German Appreciation of Allied Intentions in the West" show preparations for a main assault by twenty or more divisions at Pas-de-Calais. Hitler speculates the Allies will try to dupe them, but he lacks resources to penetrate Fortitude.

Pas-de-Calais

The strongpoint in the Atlantic Wall, Pas-de-Calais is located far eastward from the Cotentin Peninsula and Calvados coast where D-Day actually takes place. Both Hitler and Field Marshal Erwin Rommel are convinced this narrow point in the English Channel is where the Allies will come ashore, and Rommel concentrates defenses and reinforcements at this point. To attract the Allies to their strongpoint, the Germans base their V-1 rockets near Pas-de-Calais. The Allies' Operation Fortitude does everything it can to convince the Germans they intend to hit at Pas-de-Calais in order to keep German forces strongest there, far from the beaches designated for Operation Overlord. For weeks after the Allies overwhelm the vaunted Atlantic Wall, the Germans remain convinced it is but a feint and stand ready to defend Pas-de-Calais.

Sword Beach

The landing area of the British 3rd Division, plus British and French commandos, Sword is the easternmost of beaches used for the invasion, on the Bay of the Seine, stretching from Lion-sur-Mer to Ouistreham, protected on the flank by the British 6th Airborne Division. Extensive beach obstacles and low dunes defend Sword Beach. A row of French vacation homes is torn down to improve defensive fire. Casements are scattered along the beach, but defenses have less depth than at Omaha Beach. The Germans depend mostly on the 75mm guns at Merville, taken out by the U.S. 6th Airborne, and the ineffective 155mm guns at Le Havre, which foolishly spend the morning dueling with HMS *Warspite* rather than targeting Sword Beach. Mortars and machine guns pound the beach, antitank ditches and mines slow traffic inland, and massive concrete walls block the town streets. Sword's sectors (right-to-left) are Peter, Queen, and Roger, assaulted, respectively, by the South Lancashire, Suffolk Regiment, and East Yorkshire regiments, supported by DD tanks. They are to open exits for the units that follow the first wave.

Utah Beach

The landing area of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division on the Cotentin Peninsula, Utah beach is the westernmost point of the D-Day invasion. Extensive beach obstacles defend Utah Beach. A row of French vacation homes is torn down to improve defensive fire. Casements are scattered along the beach, but defenses have less depth than at Omaha Beach, and six 155-mm guns at Pointe-du-Hoc are as capable of hitting offshore shipping at Utah as at Omaha. Utah has no bluffs from which the Germans can establish comprehensive fire coverage; instead, the Germans dig into the dunes behind mines and barbed wire, or man Tobruks connected by underground trenches. The strongpoint on Utah Beach is a blockhouse at La Madeleine. Behind the dunes is a road running parallel to the beach, fed by four "causeways" that cross fields Rommel has flooded. Beyond the fields, Rommel has stationed artillery, which is pre-sighted on the causeways. Inland units stick logs into the ground ("Rommel's asparagus") to damage wooden gliders.

Allied plans call for four waves in rapid succession to hit the beaches, but tides, wind, waves, smoke, and the loss of three out of four LCCs contribute to bringing Brig. Gen. Roosevelt's boat ashore a half mile south - fortuitously - at the wrecked fortifications at Exit 2, rather than the formidable ones at Exit 3. Thus, the Allies only encounter scattered small-arms fire and casualties are "astonishingly light," twenty times less than occur in training. Mines cause most of the casualties. Equally astonishing is the movement of 20,000 men and 1,700 motorized vehicles ashore in one day. Pre-planning is scrapped at the outset, but the 4th Division meets nearly all its objectives.

The Wehrmacht

Germany's army, the *Wehrmacht*, begins World War II, in 1939, as a lightening-fast organization. Its momentum slows in 1940-42, as a result of encountering the Russian winter and the determined Red Army. Fighting along 11,000 kilometers on three fronts, the *Wehrmacht* finds itself impossibly overextended, and a third of its fighters on the dreaded Eastern Front fall casualty. The *Wehrmacht* lowers its standards, enlisting older men, boys and foreigners, all of whom require special attention to prevent defection. Morale drops after terrible defeats at Stalingrad and Kursk. F'hrer Directive No. 51 (Nov. 3, 1943) orders troops freed up from the Eastern front for use where the danger is greatest—the West. The best young recruits, the indoctrinated alumni of the Hitler Youth, are designated for crack units. The *Waffen-SS*, not an integral part of the Wehrmacht, receives first priority. Next in line for these idealistic youths are the *Fallschirmjdger* (paratroop) and *Panzer* (armored) units. These units are given the best arms available, but are not yet in place in France on June 6, 1944.

The renowned Field Marshal Erwin Rommel commands Army Group B, under the aged Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt. He gives priority to strengthening the physical elements of the Atlantic Wall, even diverting units from training to construction. He and Hitler are convinced the Allies will invade at Pas-de-Calais. Rommel lacks resources for fixed defenses inland, but hedgerow country is ideal for the defenders. Hitler resolves Rommel and Rundstedt's differences over how to use the panzers by dividing the command, giving Rommel the 2nd, 21st, and 116th divisions and retaining four others inland under Jodl, to be released once Allied intentions are clear. Believing the Allies will land at a high tide, Rommel and other senior commanders are absent when the Allies hit. The forces Rommel deploys on the D-Day beaches are the 243rd, 709th, 352nd, 716th infantry; the 2nd, 21st, and 116th panzer divisions; and the 91st and elite 6th Parachute Regiment, commanded by the legendary Col. Frederick von der Heydte.

The *Wehrmacht*'s antiaircraft batteries do a "creditable job" compared with "confused and hesitant" ground troops. Individual German soldiers fight bravely, but officers of all ranks pathetically avoid the kind of battlefield initiative that Allied commanders at all levels routinely accept. This stems from the top commanders' absence, from the Allies' patternless airdrop and from an SAS dummy operation, which ties up 2,000 men searching for phantom troops. The *Wehrmacht* cannot tell if this is an invasion, scattered raids or Resistance operations. Sabotaged landlines keep the *Wehrmacht* in barracks, cut off from orders without which even accomplished commanders may not act.

Themes

Initiative

Throughout *D-Day,* Stephen E. Ambrose counter poses the static German command structure with the ability of the Western Allies to be innovative and work around problems. It begins when the Navy prefers to build capital ships rather than landing craft, so Andrew Higgins and other inventors and entrepreneurs take up the slack. It continues when the supreme commander, General Eisenhower, decides when the invasion will take place and where but leaves the details to commanders down through the chain of command to individual squads. When the intricate plans, as thick as a phone book, fail across the board before a single GI or Tommie reaches Europe, everyone is able to analyze the current situation and adjust the plans to work towards the objectives with which everyone has been made familiar.

Airborne troops are scattered across Normandy by green pilots experiencing nighttime clouds and flak for the first time. Individuals group together as they walk towards their original objectives. Some groups include officers and NCOs; other groups challenge privates to exercise initiative. The same occurs on the beaches, where strong tides and winds cause most landing craft to miss their targets by as much as a kilometer. Men do not recognize the topography they have studied intently on maps, aerial photographs, and models, but they adjust and move to the inland passes that they know from their intensive training are there. Specialists, a substantial part of the Allied effort, often find themselves on the beach without the equipment they need to function, and therefore, pick up helmets and rifles from the fallen and become infantrymen. Units intermix and develop cohesion on the go. The trauma of landing often immobilizes survivors until someone, anywhere from private to colonel, takes the initiative and leads by example. Others then see how to follow.

Maj. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., is held up as an example of a commander who can innovate. Against him stand all the German brass who know what must be done to engage the invaders but dare do nothing without orders from above. Unfortunately for Germany, those who can issue orders are unavailable in Normandy on June 6. The ultimate decision maker, Adolf Hitler, sleeps until noon and no one has the courage to wake him. The panzer counteroffensive is too little, too late, and comes after the Allies are most vulnerable. Individual German soldiers fight bravely, but officers of all ranks pathetically avoid the kind of battlefield initiative that Allied commanders at all levels routinely accept. The Allies expect retaliation by land or air to which they are vulnerable at the end of D-Day, but nothing comes.

Dedication

From prologue to end, Stephen E. Ambrose emphasizes in *D-Day* how wrong Adolf Hitler is in assuming the sons of democracy, brought up reading isolationist, anti-war

literature during the Great Depression, will not rise to the challenge of fighting him. Young "citizen-soldiers" do not disappoint when called to arms. Their commander-in-chief for Operation Overlord, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, views the battle as a "crusade," fought not to acquire territory but to altruistically liberate Europe's enslaved millions. Eisenhower hates Nazism and is willing to accept the inevitable sacrifice required to destroy it. Meanwhile, his counterpart in the *Wehrmacht*, the renowned Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, is merely willing to do his duty to the Fatherland. Since the defeats in North Africa, Hitler considers Rommel a defeatist and puts him in tactical command only because of his reputation. Rommel is not a member of the Nazi Party, but has, when necessary, acted as a toady to Hitler. In the spring of 1944, Rommel is influenced by his chief of staff to cooperate in the plot to assassinate the F'hrer.

Few GIs and Tommies in the ranks have any burning "patriotic passion." Few have the education or life experience to identify with the great patriotic speeches of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill or others. Rather, they are dedicated to not letting down the buddies they have lived and trained with for up to two years. Unit cohesion is very high in all the invasion forces, and the scattering and intermingling of forces after they land in Normandy impedes progress to an extent.

This late in the war, up to a third of those defending the Atlantic Wall are not ethnic Germans. They are *Ost* units are made up of prisoners of war from the Eastern Front, some from as far away as Korea. Nazi policies in the east have turned anti-communists who might be expected to fight the hated Stalin's allies into dispirited groups kept from defecting only by German NCOs holding pistols to their heads and telling them defectors will be shot by the Allies as traitors. *D-Day* is filled with stories of defectors, including some who dispatch their NCOs first. The flower of Nazi Germany's youth, those indoctrinated since childhood, are reserved for elite, well-armed forces, but they too fall to the overwhelming might of the Allies.

Religion

Stephen E. Ambrose repeatedly shows in *D-Day* how GIs and Tommies turn to prayer as the invasion grows near and on the battlefield. Ambrose gives no background on levels of religiosity at the end of the Great Depression, but shows it alive among the troops and at home among their relatives. Everyone has an impulse to pray. Churches and synagogues across America hold special services when word arrives that the invasion has begun. Film from the battlefields is closely censored to omit dead or badly-wounded Americans, so families wait and pray that Western Union does not come to their door. Working in defense plants, they pray they have done their part well. President Franklin D. Roosevelt uses the power of radio to unite the nation in prayer, speaking of young men fighting and dying, not for the cause of conquest but seeking to liberate others. The *New York Times* declares it "the hour for which we were born" and calls for prayers for "the boys," the country, and the cause of freedom and equality for which God created man. King George VI tells his subjects he cannot envision anyone in society unwilling to take time out to pray for the armed forces who stand in harm's way.

In England, packed into the "sausages" (staging areas), men flock to the confessional and to Mass; priests are "in their heyday." One soldier recalls seeing Jews going to communion. Everybody is "scared to death." Men naturally bargain with God in exchange for their survival, vowing to keep the commandments or enter the priesthood. Rosaries are said rapidly and everywhere. As they queue up to board ships or airplanes, this appeal to God intensifies. Troops listen to broadcasts of Eisenhower's order of the day, which speaks of a "Great Crusade" backed by the hopes and prayers of "liberty-loving people everywhere." Eisenhower wishes them good luck and invokes "the blessing of Almighty God" on their "great and noble undertaking." Aboard C-47 Dakotas dodging flak and packed in landing craft bobbing off the coast, men "curse and swear," vomit, and, thinking of home and worrying about casualties, pray. "Padres" roam the beaches under fire, ministering to the dead and wounded. Some die. As night falls on D-Day, naval chief Admiral Ramsay believes progress has been made and thanks God, while a simple paratrooper, having prayed since departing to survive D-Day, prays again to survive D-Day plus one.

Style

Perspective

At the time *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II* is published in 1994, (the fiftieth anniversary of the landing), Stephen E. Ambrose serves as the Boyd Professor of History at the University of New Orleans, the director of the Eisenhower Center and the president of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans. He comes to this book having already dealt with the great conflict in a number of earlier books. In approach, *D-Day* is a prequel to *Band of Brothers,* which follows E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne, from the beaches of Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest. *Pegasus Bridge* examines another prime Allied target on June 6, 1944, which is surveyed in this volume. Ambrose also wrote multi-volume biographies of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon. At several points, Ambrose makes clear he has a personal relationship with the general (whom he *never* calls "Ike").

After comparing and contrasting the supreme commanders of the forces that clash on D-Day, Eisenhower and Rommel, Ambrose loses interest in the "brass," turning his focus to the ordinary "citizen-soldiers" - enlisted men and junior officers - who fight in Normandy that critical day. Ambrose gives many faces to the facts by drawing on some 1,400 oral histories collected in the Eisenhower Center. American stories predominate, but British, Canadian, French and even Germans are given a voice. This results in considerable repetition but also preserves many poignant, unforgettable scenes. Some stories are drawn out in a chapter or over several chapters, and woven together with others in ways that can be confusing. There is an enormous "cast of characters." Ambrose seems drawn to humor in the midst of horror and tragedy. In some cases only a snippet of a memoir appears to be used, while in other cases, Ambrose quotes extensively, commenting as he goes. Ambrose tells why he believes the Allies win the day and provides enough detail for the reader to accept the conclusions as objective.

Tone

D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II by Stephen E. Ambrose is a pious, reverential account of the battlefields, intended for non-historians. The ideal reader is already a World War II buff with some grounding in the complex facts and military jargon of the era. Others will find themselves searching for definitions; Wikipedia.com generally suffices.

Released at the fiftieth anniversary, *D-Day* is a paean to a rapidly-vanishing generation and does a good job of memorializing many of their stories in a smoothly-flowing narrative. Ambrose does his best to convince readers that democracy is capable - or at least was in 1944 - of rallying youth to its idealistic defense better than totalitarian regimes. He often repeats this theme, with only minor variations in various contexts.

One need not be a super-patriot to appreciate the sacrifices of those who fought on June 6, 1944, or Ambrose's efforts to record them.

Ambrose is subjectively on the Allies' side but openly sympathetic to individual Germans, who find themselves at war. The POWs from the Eastern Front, put into *Wehrmacht* uniforms and told to defend the Atlantic Wall or be shot by their German NCOs, receive special sympathy. Ambrose almost gleefully includes many cases where they cheerfully surrender at the first chance. Conversely, Ambrose shows only contempt for the "F'hrer Principle" (father principle), which costs Germany the battle at Normandy and ultimately the war. In order to show the horror of war at its most intimate level, Ambrose includes numerous stories in which individual GIs and Tommies wound or kill Germans. The number of stories included renders the book, overall, objective.

Structure

D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II by Stephen E. Ambrose consists of a prologue, thirty-two numbered and titled chapters, a glossary, endnotes, bibliography, appendix listing the names of veterans whose stories are preserved in the Eisenhower Center, and an index. Nine, detailed battle maps accompany the text, located in chapters where they are the most useful. The prologue profiles in detail the first British and American fatalities on D-Day and suggests Hitler might have thought twice about starting World War II had he seen those men in action. Instead, the dictator assumes the sons of democracy, brought up reading isolationist, anti-war literature, would not rise to the challenge of fighting him. Young citizen-soldiers, whose stories Ambrose relates, do not disappoint when called to arms.

Chapters 1 ("The Defenders"), 2 ("The Attackers"), and 3 ("The Commanders") set the stage for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the Germans and the Allies as they prepare to clash on D-Day. Eisenhower and Rommel are the only characters whose biographies are examined in any detail. Chapter 4 ("Where and When?) shows how the Normandy beaches and an early-June landing date are selected. Chapters 5 ("Utilizing Assets"), 6 ("Planning and Preparing"), and 7 ("Training") concentrate on Allied efforts, because a mobile attacker always enjoys the luxury of concentrating where he wishes; whereas, defenders must be vigilant everywhere. Chapter 8 ("Marshalling and Briefing") and 9 ("Loading") characterize life among the Allies after training is complete and only waiting remains. Chapter 10 ("Decision to Go") follows Eisenhower's agonizing over weather conditions and decision to commit on June 6.

The next four chapters sketch preliminaries to the great assault. First, the paratroopers and glider troops are seen dropping into France: Chapter 11 ("Cracking the Atlantic Wall: The Airborne into Normandy") and Chapter 12 ("'Let's Get those Bastards': The Airborne Night Attack"). Next come the "softening-up" efforts by the air forces (Chapter 13: "'The Greatest Show Ever Staged': The Air Bombardment") and the naval forces (Chapter 14: "A Long, Endless Column of Ships: The Naval Crossing and Bombardment").

The remaining chapters look at the assault by sea, beach-by-beach, moving west to east across the map of the beachheads. There is, inevitably, much repetition in these accounts. Chapters 15 and 16 examines Utah Beach ("'We'll Start the War from Right Here': The 4th Division at Utah Beach" and "*'Nous Restons Ici':* The Airborne in the Cotentin"). Omaha Beach gets the lion's share, chapters 17 ("Visitors to Hell: The 116th Regiment at Omaha"), 18 ("Utter Chaos Reigned: The 16th Regiment at Omaha"), 19 ("Traffic Jam: Tanks, Artillery, and Engineers at Omaha"), 20 ("'I Am a Destroyer Man': The Navy at Omaha Beach"), 21 ("'Will You Tell Me How We Did This?': The 2nd Ranger Battalion on D-Day Morning"), 22 ("Up the Bluff at Vierville: The 116th Regiment and 5th Ranger Battalion"), 23 ("Catastrophe Contained: Easy Red Sector, Omaha Beach"), 24 ("Struggle for the High Ground: Vierville, St.-Laurent, and Colleville"), and 25 ("'It Was Just Fantastic': Afternoon on Omaha Beach").

After an interlude, Chapter 26 ("The World Holds Its Breath: D-Day on the Home Fronts"), the non-American beachheads are examined: chapters 27 ("'Fairly Stuffed with Gadgets': The British Opening Moves"), 28 ("'Everything Was Well Ordered': The 50th Division at Gold Beach"), 29 ("Payback: The Canadians at Juno Beach"), 30 ("'An Unforgettable Sight': The British at Sword Beach"), and 31 ("'My God, We've Done It': The British Airborne on D-Day"). Chapter 32 ("'When Can Their Glory Fade?': The End of the Day") serves as a brief epilogue.

Quotes

"Hitler spent hours studying the maps showing German installations along the Atlantic Wall. He demanded reports on building progress, the thickness of the concrete, the kind of concrete used, the system used to put in the steel reinforcement - these reports often ran to more than ten pages. But, after ordering the creation of the greatest fortification in history, he never bothered to inspect any part of it. After leaving Paris in triumph in the summer of 1940, he did not set foot on French soil again until mid-June 1944. Yet he declared this was the decisive theater!" Chapter 1, pg. 38.

"That a cross-Channel attack against the Atlantic Wall could even be contemplated was a tribute to what Dwight Eisenhower called 'the fury of an aroused democracy.' What made D-Day possible was the never-ending flow of weapons from American factories, the Ultra and the Double Cross System, victory in the Battle of the Atlantic, control of the air and sea, British inventiveness, the French Resistance, the creation of citizen armies in the Western democracies, the persistence and genius of Andrew Higgins and other inventors and entrepreneurs, the cooperation of business, government, and labor in the United States and the United Kingdom, and more - all summed up in the single word 'teamwork.'" Chapter 2, pg. 57.

"Here was a profound difference between Rommel and Eisenhower. Eisenhower believed with all his heart in the cause he was fighting for. To him, the invasion was a crusade designed to end the Nazi occupation of Europe and destroy the scourge of Nazism forever. He hated the Nazis and all they represented. Although a patriot, Rommel was no Nazi - even though at times he had been a toady to Hitler. To Rommel, the coming battle would be fought against an enemy he never hated and indeed respected. He approached the battle with professional competence rather than the zeal of a crusader. Chapter 3, pg. 70.

"So the GI hitting the beach in the first wave at Omaha would have to get through the minefields in the Channel without his LST blowing up, then get from ship to shore in a Higgins boat taking fire from inland batteries, then work his way through an obstacle-studded tidal flat of some 150 meters crisscrossed by machine-gun and rifle fire, with big shells whistling by and mortars exploding all around, to find his first protection behind the shingle. There he would be caught in a triple crossfire - machine guns and heavy artillery from the sides, small arms from the front, mortars coming down from above. "If the GI was not killed getting off his landing craft or crossing the tidal flat, if by some miracle he made it to the shingle, Rommel wanted him wounded before he got there. If not wounded, paralyzed by fear." Chapter 6, pgs. 110-111.

"Eisenhower spent a great deal of his time in the field, inspecting, watching training exercises. He wanted to see as many men as possible and let them see him. He managed to talk to hundreds personally. In the four months from February 1 to June 1, he visited twenty-six divisions, twenty-four airfields, five ships of war, and countless depots, shops, hospitals, and other installations." Chapter 7, pg. 135.

"Death was on the mind of many of the men. As Pvt. Clair Galdonik remembered his bus ide to Dartmouth, 'Few words were spoken among us. No joking or prankster stunts. We felt closer to each other now than ever before.' Motor Machinist Charles Jarreau of the Coast Guard was on LCI 94, watching the gathering on the quay at Weymouth. 'The troops were just flooding the docks,' he recalled. 'People everywhere. Priests were in their heyday. I even saw Jews go and take communion. Everybody scared to death.'" Chapter 9, pgs. 166-167.

"When he heard that, Leigh-Mallory lost his enthusiasm. He urged postponement to June 19. Eisenhower began pacing the room, head down, chin on his chest, hands clasped behind his back. "Suddenly he shot his chin out at Smith. 'What do you think?' "'It's a helluva gamble but it's the best possible gamble,' Smith replied. "Eisenhower nodded, paced, some more, stopped, looked at Tedder and asked his opinion. Todder though it was 'chancy' and wanted to postpone. Again Eisenhower nodded, paced, stopped, turned to Montgomery and asked, 'Do you see any reason for not going Tuesday?' Montgomery looked Eisenhower in the eye and replied, 'I would say - Go!'" Chapter 10, pt. 187.

"On *Empire Javelin,* a British transport carrying the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, 29th Division, off Omaha Beach, the davit lowering one craft got stuck for half an hour halfway down the ship's side, directly beneath the scupper. 'During this half-hour, the bowels of the ship's company made the most of an opportunity that Englishmen have sought since 1776,' recalled Maj. Tom Dallas, the battalion executive officer. 'Yells from the boat were unavailing. Streams, colored everything from canary yellow to sienna brown and olive green, continued to flush into the command group, decorating every man aboard. We cursed, we cried, and we laughed, but it kept coming. When we started for shore, we were all covered with shit.'" Chapter 14, pg. 260.

"With that news General Salmuth, commanding the Fifteenth Army, went back to bed. So did Speidel and most of Rommel's staff at La Roche-Guyon. General Blumentritt from Rundstedt's headquarters told General Jodl at Hitler's headquarters in Berchtesgaden that a major invasion appeared to be taking place and asked for the release of the armored reserve, I SS Panzer Corps outside Paris. Jodl refused to wake Hitler." Chapter 16, pg. 302.

"Thompson's frustration that morning was shared by every survivor of the first two hours of the battle, whether tankers or infantrymen or artillerymen or engineers or demolition teams. Many thought they had failed. When the 0830 order to cease landing came through, men were close to despair. At Omaha at least, Rommel's fixed defenses seemed to have stopped them cold." Chapter 19, pg. 379.

"The men already ashore would have to do these jobs without land-based artillery support and without reinforcements of men or supplies. This was the moment Eisenhower had feared above all others. The Americans had a sizable force ashore, about 5,000 fighting men, but because they were now cut off from the sea they were as much potential hostages as potential offensive threat. "This was the moment Rommel had anticipated above all others. His enemy was caught half on, half off, unable to

reinforce or withdraw. And unable to advance, apparently, so strong were the defenses at the exits from the beach. The Overlord plan had called for the exits to be open by 0730. At 0830, they remained sealed shut and unapproachable." Chapter 22, pg. 418.

"The British corporal with the Bren gun stood next to Masters. The Austrian boy was in great pain from his wound. 'How do you say "I'm sorry" in German?' the corporal asked. "*Es tut mir leid*," I said "or *Verzeihung*." ""*Verzeihung*," the corporal tried to say to the boy. He was a good soldier and a good man, and he told me he had never shot anybody before. The next day he was killed leading a charge firing his Bren gun from the shoulder.'" Chapter 30 pg. 564.

Topics for Discussion

What do you think is the biggest mistake on D-Day and is anyone personally culpable for it?

What do you think is the biggest success on D-Day, and can anyone take personal credit for it?

What are "Hobart's Funnies?" What role do they play, and why do the Americans not make use of them?

How do forces of nature affect the timing, placement and outcome of D-Day?

Is the government right in forbidding pictures of dead and wounded soldiers on D-Day?

What makes General Eisenhower a successful Supreme Commander? What are his strengths and weaknesses? What did he learn in North Africa and implement on Normandy?

Could Field Marshal Rommel have repulsed the Allies if he had been given Eisenhower's freedom to command? What might he have done differently?

How is the clichy "British brains and American brawn" accurate and inaccurate?