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My Parachute Regiment moved to airfields in England on Jun 5, 1944 ready for combat. Each paratrooper was self contained for 3 days. General Eisenhower was at the airfield to wish us well; he referred to us as "jumpers." I was a demolition specialist; therefore I had 10 pounds of C2 explosive attached to each leg, along with other necessary equipment. Around dusk we boarded the C47 Aircraft and lift off began. My Regiment was to be dropped behind Utah Beach, Normandy, France. At 12:30 a.m. as the aircraft approached the French Coast, fog appeared causing the aircraft to lose formation. As we moved inland, flak became intense causing further loss of formation. Each aircraft had bundles of equipment to be dropped. With the bundles being hung in the Exit doors of the aircraft, it caused delay to the paratroopers being dropped. Forty-seven of the Division's aircraft were destroyed in the air costing approximately 850 men their lives.

Hundreds of paratroopers were wounded or killed before reaching the ground. Hundreds landed in water and drowned while others had broken bones from landing and could not move. My landing was good, and I was immediately joined by two paratroopers. We determined our position and moved toward the Douve River. It was necessary that the Locks be captured and opened. If closed, the entire low land would be flooded drowning thousands of paratroopers.

At 6:30 a.m. the assault on Utah Beach began. After daylight we were confronted by a large enemy force. I heard a voice behind me; it was a Navy Lt. that had been imbedded with us. He sent our position to his ship armed with 8 inch guns. The ship answered. "they are on their way." It sounded as if a freight train was coming at us. Then the guns hit the mark.

We continued to move toward the Douve River while receiving mortar fire and small arms fire all along the way. As we approached the Douve River, we met one of our officers with ten (10) men. We then moved to the La Barquette Locks and found that Col Johnson, our Commander, had been dropped in England on Jun 5, 1944 ready for combat. He had assembled approximately 100 troops and had captured the Locks and the area. Our group then dug in to control the Locks and area for the remainder of the day and the night. We continued to receive shelling, mortar fire, and small arms fire during the night.

A day to remember and the return of freedom to our French allies in Europe.