

Captured in a moment of giving

■ There was more to the famous photo than meets the eye

By Tom Richards
Post-Crescent staff writer

In his diary, Robert Capa tells of reaching the bloody sand of Omaha Beach with troops of the first wave on D-Day.

After being pinned down among the casualties, he dashed back to his boat.

"It was a new kind of fear shaking my body from toe to hair, and twisting my face," he wrote. "The men around me lay motionless. Only the dead on the water line rolled with the waves."

Though badly shaken, Capa snapped a picture of a young sailor holding up the plasma bottle as a medic treated a wounded soldier.

Two weeks later, that picture appeared in Life magazine.

The young sailor was 22-year-old Clifford Lewis of Clintonville, a Coast Guard machinist mate first class, pressed into service aboard his ship to help with the wounded.

Lewis' widow, Ella (her husband died Dec. 7, 1990), recalled her husband's participation in the invasion.

He was aboard the LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) 94, ferrying troops of the 29th Division. Three other LCIs participated, but were destroyed.

Ella Lewis said her husband had been working at his assignment in the ship's engine room. When he was relieved of these duties, he went topside. Seeing the horrors of that combat, he helped with the wounded, which the 94 carried to hospital ships.

Ella Lewis said she has often read Clifford's World War II diary.

"I didn't know for years that he kept a diary," she said. "He did not talk about these experiences. We would attend Coast Guard reunions, and they would only talk about the fun things they did."

She said that the 94 served as a liaison ship after the invasion, picking up survivors, carrying supplies.

On July 25, 1944, he went ashore to visit the temporary graves of three shipmates who died on D-Day, when the ship took a direct hit.

Clifford Lewis returned to the United States in November 1944, and was reassigned to the cutter Atlanta, which then saw service in the Asiatic Pacific Theater. He served three years, one month and 19 days.

Ella Lewis visited Normandy in 1992, to visit the grave of her brother, who died there in World War II, and the graves of her husband's shipmates.

"It was a magnificent feeling to look at the rows of crosses and realize the price we pay," she said.

"It's quite a feeling. What a waste. But it's a price we can't afford not to pay."

By Steve Wideman
Post-Crescent staff writer

Tucked away and neatly folded in a closet in Clarence "Sam" Duginski's house in Menasha is a small American flag.

Fifty years ago, the flag was pinned on Duginski's sleeve as he prepared, along with thousands of other Allied infantrymen, to land on Omaha Beach as part of the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

"When they pinned those flags on our arms, it sent a chill down your spine," Duginski said.

A 25-year-old member of the 343rd Medium Maintenance Company attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, Duginski was in the second assault wave to face a curtain of German artillery, machine gun and small arms fire blanketing Omaha Beach.

"They woke us about 3 a.m.," Duginski said. "They fed us and told us we could have anything we wanted to eat, steak or pork chops, whatever we wanted."

The assault troopers then attended on-ship religious services.

"There was a priest, minister and rabbi," Duginski, a Catholic, said. "When they offered us Communion, I knew I was pretty close to dying. It was scary."

His company climbed to rope nets and boarded small landing craft bouncing wildly in the rough channel water and sustained the first casualty of the day.

"One guy got his foot crushed between the landing craft and the transport when he misjudged the bouncing of the landing craft," he said.

Soldiers boarding the small landing craft found the bottoms awash with blood of victims killed and wounded in the initial assault

A soldier's fears

'I knew I was pretty close to dying. It was scary'

The battle

By the thinnest of threads, the Allied invasion forces gripped the European continent as the sun rose high over Normandy, France.

Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., who won a Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions on D-Day, but died of a heart attack within a week, had led his 4th Infantry Division off Utah Beach toward a rendezvous with paratroopers from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.

On Omaha Beach, Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, commander of the U.S. 1st Army, at mid-morning considered pulling troops off the beach after receiving bleak reports from units pinned down by withering German fire. U.S. Navy

destroyers ventured dangerously close to shore in as little as nine feet of water to support the trapped soldiers with fire from their 5-inch main guns and 20mm and 40mm batteries.

As soldiers in individual and group efforts began to cross the beach and penetrate the German defense, tens of thousands of men were boarding landing craft splattered with the blood and vomit of their predecessors to reinforce the struggling assault troops on the beaches.

Some of those support troops were ready to wage war without guns as teams of doctors and medics readied to treat the onslaught of casualties.

artillery were hundreds of thousands of hidden land mines.

"So many guys got their legs blown off," he said.

Once on shore, Duginski was pinned down, along with hundreds of fellow infantrymen, by machine gun fire from German pillboxes.

"We were pinned down until somebody got brave enough to get up and throw a grenade in the pillbox," he said.

Once the infantry gained a toehold, Duginski said, "the Germans surrendered easily. By nightfall, we had a bunch of prisoners. But that night the Luftwaffe bombed the hell out of us. It looked like the Fourth of July."

Duginski hit the beach to find an infantryman with his foot blown off above the ankle.

"I tied a tourniquet around his leg and he asked me for a cigarette," he said. "I told him he had my sympathy. He said 'No, you have mine because my fighting is done.'"

Duginski and a friend dug a fox-hole on the beach.

As the infantry regrouped and started moving off the beach, Duginski said the first thing he saw was the flash of machine guns firing from pillboxes.

"The pillboxes looked like little fishing shanties," he said.

Duginski joined scores of other soldiers returning the fire.

"We didn't know if we hit anything or not, we were just scared," he said.

Nightfall found Duginski about 300 yards behind the beach, helping secure a perimeter against German counterattack.

Duginski went on to participate in campaigns in Northern France and Germany.

waves.

"They brought back some wounded," he said. "We looked down into the landing craft and all we could see was blood."

The hearty meals of a few hours before proved a serious problem for infantrymen who succumbed to seasickness as the flat-bottomed landing craft tossed relentlessly from side to side in the wind-borne swells in a 10-mile run for the beach.

"We were packed in there like sardines," Duginski said. "Guys were heaving down your neck. For 10 miles, we knelt down in the landing craft in a mixture of blood and vomit. It was rough as hell."

The landing craft reached the beach in a hail of gunfire as the



Duginski

ramp lowered to expose the beach.

"You could hear the bullets hitting the water — ching, ching. We thought, 'Oh God!' We were so scared, but we had to go."

Duginski jumped into chest-deep water, but a flotation device called a Mae West, helped keep him upright despite being loaded down with equipment.

"The beach was covered with those Mae Wests," he recalled.

Duginski said many soldiers disappeared under the churning waters and drowned in deep holes made by earlier landing craft that had dug into the soft sands of Omaha Beach.

Adding to the fatal swarms of bullets and shrapnel from exploding

ANYONE CAN HAVE PROBLEMS

and we're here to help.

Comprehensive Counseling Services
State Certified for Health Insurance
• Individual • Marital • Family
• Addictions

 Family Service Association
OF THE FOX VALLEY, INC.
since 1967

739-4226
On Midway Road
1488 Kenwood Center Menasha

To all of our vets:
THANKS

June 6, 1944

When Allied Forces invaded Normandy, employees from Theda Clark were there - as G.I.'s fighting for their lives, or as doctors and nurses caring for the wounded.

For more than 80 years, through two world wars, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf Conflict, the men and women of Theda Clark have served their country in the Armed Forces, and cared for both their comrades in arms and their families back home.

On this 50th anniversary of D-Day, please join us in saluting those who sacrificed so much for so many.

THEDA CLARK
Regional Medical Center

130 Second St. • Neenah, WI 54956 • 414-729-3100
A Member of Nevus Health Group

