

HUDGINS

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another wave came over and then another until the air was filled with green, blue, crimson, white, and yellow shapes, which as they sank to the ground, carpeted it as though with great, bright flowers.”

Another eyewitness account describes the event as follows: “With the approaching drone of the '47s, silence descended on the ranks of watchers, as all attention was riveted skyward. The air armada roared along in a perfect V of V's, and a spontaneous murmur ran thru the on-lookers as the first sky troopers cleared the doors and started the long descent. Stick after stick emptied into space in a seemingly unending deluge of men and equipment. As soon as the first men began to land, the visitors rode out to watch them assemble in a stretch of woods. The troopers were twisting out of their chutes as rapidly as possible and heading for the assembly area on a dead run, putting their weapons together without slackening speed ... The order came to move out, and in record time from the moment of the jump, the two Currahee battalions were moving out in orderly attack formation.”

Following the demonstration, Churchill addressed the American troops. Here are some ex-

cerpts from that stirring speech: “I see gathered here on this English soil the soldiers of our great American ally preparing themselves to strike a blow for a cause which is a greater cause than either of our two countries have ever fought for in bygone days ... You have a great part to play. You are specially trained. You are the most modern expression of war. Soon you will have the opportunity of testifying your faith in all those inspiring phrases of the American Constitution and of striking a blow, when however it may leave the world, will as we are determined, make it a better and broader world for all.”

Churchill concluded: “Here you are far from your homes. Great oceans lie between you and the land you love. Now brace yourself for a struggle which I am bound to say you can approach with feelings of utmost confidence and resolution. Be assured deeds will be done by British and American forces which long will be celebrated in the history of warlike and valiant men fighting for right and freedom. I thank God that you are here and from the bottom of my heart, I wish you all good fortune and success.”

The 506th played an integral part in the

Normandy Invasion. The plan for the 2nd Battalion was to be dropped in Zone C, an area between the villages of Hiesville and Ste. Marie Du Mont. Headquarters Company was to set up in Hebert as the Battalion reserve. Things did not go as planned.

According to the reports of combat historians, of the 81 planes that were meant to drop men in Zone C, only 10 did so successfully. The problem began as the planes came in over the land and directly into heavy fog and cloud cover. Their formations began to break apart. As the planes began to enter clear skies near the drop zones, they ran into heavy flak. Several of the pilots disobeyed orders and began to take evasive measures - this further disrupted the formations.

A plan that called for a heavy concentration of paratroopers to be dropped in very specific areas thus fell apart. The drop pattern became very scattered and most of the planes overshoot the drop zones by several miles. As it turned out, this was a bit of a mixed blessing for the troops.

History later confirmed the Germans were expecting this invasion from the air and had most of the more obvious landing sites well guarded. The paratroopers who did find the landing zones, came under heavy enemy fire.

I have no way of knowing what Harry's personal experience was like during combat. The men ended up so scattered that they were, in many cases unable to meet up with others of their own companies, much less be in communication with battalion and regimental commands.

The one thing my grandfather did tell my



Harry Huggins (right) is pictured with his brother SW Huggins who served as a merchant Marine.

mother about his time at war was that his best friend was shot down right next to him. I can only wonder when that incident occurred.

There is much I don't know about Harry. I don't know if he faced his new challenge as a soldier with fear or anticipation. I don't know in what ways he was changed by his experiences at war. But, I know that he served bravely and was awarded two bronze stars for acts of combat heroism.

Through the aid of official documents, letters, receipts and mementos held on to for all these years, a life begins to take shape. And, I continue a discovery of my own family history, intricately entwined with the history of our nation on a much grander scale - the history of a war that changed the world.

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