

NCO History Paper

1SG Leonard Lomells contributions to the success of D-day.

By

MSG JOHN CLEMENTS

L07

SGM TAYLOR

10 December, 2005

Leonard Lomell is a true success story for the non-commissioned officer corps of the United States Army. There is no true way to measure how many lives he saved during the D-day invasion. In my research I found it is possible without his successes alone, D-day may not have been successful. I will tell you this is a true story about a real American Hero during a time in our nation's history that heroes were certainly needed.

Ranger Leonard G. Lomell was born on January 22, 1920 in Brooklyn, New York. In search of a seashore community his Scandinavian immigrant parents moved to the still developing town of Point Pleasant, NJ a few years later. While struggling through the Great Depression, Mr. Lomell attended Point Pleasant Beach High School, working at Jenkinson's beaches during the summers. He graduated in 1937. His parents' idealistic values coupled with a top notch education provided by Point Beach aided in forming Mr. Lomell's character, shaping his values, aiming him toward a successful and prosperous future. Besides focusing on studies, Leonard Lomell enjoyed participating in high school football, baseball and golf. He went on to attend Tennessee Wesleyan College, graduating in 1941. During his college days he was involved in playing college football, boxing in the school's welterweight division, and editing the college's paper. In addition to these accomplishments, Leonard Lomell was elected President of his fraternity. An athletic scholarship combined with a work program provided him with his college education.

Leonard Lomell entered military service soon after his graduation, beginning his training in the 76th Infantry Division and quickly rose to the rank of Platoon Sergeant. He then volunteered for service with the famed Army Rangers rising in rank to company 1SG.

1SG Leonard Lomell was assigned to D company 2nd Ranger Battalion. Prior to going to Normandy for D-day, Ranger Lomell and the Rangers were stationed in England where they practiced cliff climbing and also did demolition training while they were there. From Bude they went to Swanage, England, and there with D, E, and F companies of the 2nd Battalion, they were informed of what the mission of the 2nd Rangers would be and went with Colonel Rudder to Corps Headquarters and actually visited their war room. At that time he was privy to top-secret information about the invasion, such as time and place and received his "Bigot" card that that authorized him to enter any war room in the Army area.

Pointe du Hoc was located right in the middle of Omaha beach and Utah beach. There were six 155mm cannons templated on the top of Pointe du Hoc located in heavily reinforced concrete bunkers that were capable of hitting both beaches. The basic mission of the rangers on D-Day would be to climb the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc and take out the six 155mm cannons that were located there. This was a British navy mission also, since they had a great deal of experience in the Mediterranean and other areas of raids and cliff climbing. They also learned how to work in their LCAs, which is a "landing craft, assault." It has a very wide gunwale, approximately 3 to 3 1/2 feet wide, and on this gunwale they placed rockets with grappling hooks on the end and trailed them with ropes and rope ladders and toggle ropes so that they could fire them over the cliffs and then climb the ropes. Another part of the mission was the fire ladders, which were taken from the London Fire Department and mounted on American DUKWs, which is a vehicle that will go both in water and on land.

The Rangers finally finished their training and were ready for the assault on D-day. On 6 June 1944 the Rangers loaded on LCAs and began the journey across the English channel. Colonel Rudder the commander of the 2nd Ranger Battalion was in the lead boat on the assault on Pointe du Hoc. As the rangers started approaching the cliffs COL. Rudder realized that the current had pulled the rangers about four kilometers east and they were heading toward Pointe de la Percee. This point was about half way between the Vierville draw which is located on the western edge of Omaha beach and Pointe du Hoc. COL. Rudder immediately re-directed the British coxswain to the west. The LCAs were forced to skirt the shore line. While skirting the shore line they were continuously running the gauntlet of fire from German guns along four kilometers of coast line. Some of the Naval ships like the USS Satterlee and HMS Talybont saw what was going on and came in close to shore to fire at the Germans and support the Rangers.

The Rangers were suppose to land on both sides of Pointe du Hoc. However the easterly current proved too hard for the LCAs to fight and all the rangers ended up landing on the eastern side of the pointe. Each of the LCAs carried three pairs of rocket guns, firing steel grapnels which pulled up plain three quarter inch ropes, toggle ropes or rope ladders. Unfortunately for the rangers the ropes became saturated with water during the rough trip across the English channel and became very heavy. The rangers began to fire their rocket propelled ropes just prior to touchdown. Rangers watched with sinking hearts as the grapnels arched in toward the cliff, only to fall short from the weight of the ropes. Fortunately for the rangers at least one grapnel and rope from each LCA made it. In order for the rangers to get to the ropes they had to cross a small section of beach to get to the cliffs. This small section of beach became a major problem for the rangers due

to a German machine gun that was firing across the beach. It killed or wounded fifteen men as it swept bullets back and forth across the beach.

When Ranger Lomells LCA hit the beach he was the first one to lead the charge off the boat. When the ramp was dropped Ranger Lomell was struck in the right side by a bullet. After being shot 1SG Lomell continued to move, he jumped off the LCA and landed right in a bomb crater where he sank about 10 feet under water. The Rangers on his LCA seen this happen, they climbed over the side of the boat in about ankle deep of water. They moved forward grabbed 1SG Lomell and moved to the base of the cliffs. 1SG Lomell received some medical attention for his bullet wound then continued his climb up the cliffs.

When Ranger Lomell and the rest of D company 2nd Ranger Battalion got to the top of the cliff and secured it. They quickly realized all of the gun emplacements were empty and were replaced by telephone poles to make it look like the guns were there when photos were taken from the air. 1SG Lomell quickly realized they had to move on to their secondary objective.

The Rangers secondary objective was to secure the road about 1 kilometer inland that was the supply route in between Utah and Omaha beaches. 1SG Lomell quickly moved one of his platoons inland and was among the first group of rangers to arrive at an intersection and secure the road. While standing at the intersection, Ranger Lomell and SSG Kuhn who was the acting Platoon Sergeant noticed some fresh tracks leading down a dirt road. The two of them went to investigate only to discover the 155mm cannons camouflaged in an apple orchard. Finding the guns unsecure with the closest German platoon about 100 meters away. Ranger Lomell and Ranger Kuhn quickly went to work

to disable the guns. 1SG Lomell used the thermite grenades that him and SSG Kuhn had on them to disable two of the guns. They then quickly ran back to the rest of the platoon and gathered up as many thermite grenades as they could. They went back and rendered the rest of the guns inoperable by melting all the traversing and elevating mechanisms together. They also broke all of the sighting devices on the guns. It was the work of these two men that accomplished the Ranger mission on the morning of D-day. The Rangers mission was the first mission accomplished out of all of the allied forces on the invasion of D-day.

Ranger Lomell exhibited courage and bravery beyond the line of duty on many occasions while participating in World War II battles, such as the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, the Battles of the Brest and Cherbourg Peninsulas in France and the Battle of the Bulge in Germany. He has received the Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, the Victory Medal, and the Purple Heart with cluster and decorations for heroism from England and France. He also received a battlefield promotion to Lieutenant. As a veteran he has been honored with two distinguished Ranger Awards, the highest available. He is also a Past National Commander of the Legion of Valor, the United States' oldest veteran's organization, and Past National President of the Rangers Association.

After World War II ended, Mr. Lomell chose to study law under the GI Bill. He attended LaSalle University as well as Rutgers for courses in law, and was admitted to the Bar in 1951 as an attorney-at-law. He decided to start his own law firm in 1957. For the last 35 years he's led his own firm, seeing it become one of the largest and most prestigious in Ocean County.

Over the years he has assisted veterans, firemen, policemen, juveniles, the church, and others concerning legal services free of charge when required as a way of paying the community back for his success. In addition to his accomplishments as a lawyer, Mr. Lomell has made many contributions to the community. He was a Director of the First National Bank of Toms River. He served as a member of Dover Township's Board of Education. He was also Vice President and Director of Statewide Bancorp. He has served as President of the Garden State Philharmonic Symphony Society of Toms River and president of the Ocean County Bar Association.

Mr. Lomell has been married for over 46 years to Charlotte Ewart Lomell and has three daughters, Georgine, Pauline and Renee - all of whom are schoolteachers. He also has four grandchildren. He is a man who has given of himself at every stage of his life, a true warrior scholar.

Works Cited

Ambrose, Stephen E. D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climatic Battle of World War II.

Touchstone, 1995

<http://www.britannica.com/normandy/pri/Q00275.html>

<http://www.rangerheros.netfirms.com/>