

Adventure

The Man's Magazine of Exciting Fiction and Fact

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SEX AND YOUR HEART	Myron Brenton	20
STREET OF WOMEN	Logan Claibourne	32

picture feature

LAST KILL	Jim Frazier	22
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articles

BEACHHEAD IN HELL	Eddie S. Hughes	15
TREASURE BELOW!	Gordon Schendel	36
KILLER WOLF	Lance Kermit	42
THE PIEDMONT HARBLOTS	Cyrus W. Bell	44

pinup

SUMMERTIME GIRL: GITTA PINELLI	Turhan Bey	29
--------------------------------------	------------	----

fiction

DEATH IN HIS DUKES	David Crewe	26
ROAD FROM RUSSIA	William Chamberlain	40

departments

CAMPFIRE	6
THE LOCKER ROOM	8
ASK ADVENTURE	10
MEN'S MART	81

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SALERNO- BEACHHEAD IN HELL

BY EDDIE S. HUGHES

THEY FOUGHT AND CURSED AND DIED, BUT STILL THEY CAME ON—
THE KIDS WHO BLOODIED THE BEACH AT SALERNO—THE FIRST BIT
OF ITALY TO BE FREE AGAIN

■ IT WAS the ninth of September, 1943. In pre-dawn blackness, Texans of the U.S. Army's 36th Infantry Division were eager and ready for their first combat mission, under the worst of all battle assignments: Invasion!

H-Hour, or Zero Hour, was set for 0330.

The Texans had waited three long years for this chance. The invasion of Italy was theirs as the spearheading force. All their lives as soldiers they had been just cargo, never super cargo. Once they had sailed from Oran, away from the sweltering days and the cold

Men of the 36th Division swarm ashore under murderous shelling.



SALERNO—BEACHHEAD IN HELL

CONTINUED

nights of patrolling North Africa, the men who wore the olive drab "T" on a bit of blue cloth shaped in an arrowhead had all sensed that something big was ahead. For them, watching the minutes tick on to Zero Hour, the world would soon shrink to one precise danger point—the dark line to the east that would mark the shores of Salerno Bay.

If an invasion ship is supposed to be a lonely ship, the untried men of the 36th Division hadn't been told. They were jubilant, they joked, and they tossed the dice around in the sweat-stinking hold of their ship. Confronted with the physical fact that they were headed to their baptism of fire, on the beaches of Paestum, did not greatly bother the men. War to them had meant only one thing: Training, training and more training. They had trained the green 45th Infantry Division and re-trained the veteran First Division before those two outfits

U.P.I.



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Eisenhower and General Mark Clark survey beachhead as supporting troops take over bloody Salerno.

The German gun nests were still raking the beach.



shipped out for the invasion of Sicily. Most of the GIs in the 36th had nearly forgotten that the "T" in their division T-Patch stood for Texas—and not training.

On the eve of the invasion, General Eisenhower had announced the official surrender of Italy:

"... hostilities will cease at once, and the Italians can now have the assistance and support of the United Nations to expel the German oppressors from Italian soil."

"Hell," a soldier beefed. "Another dry run coming up."

All we'll have to do is police another goddamn area."

They were mistaken.

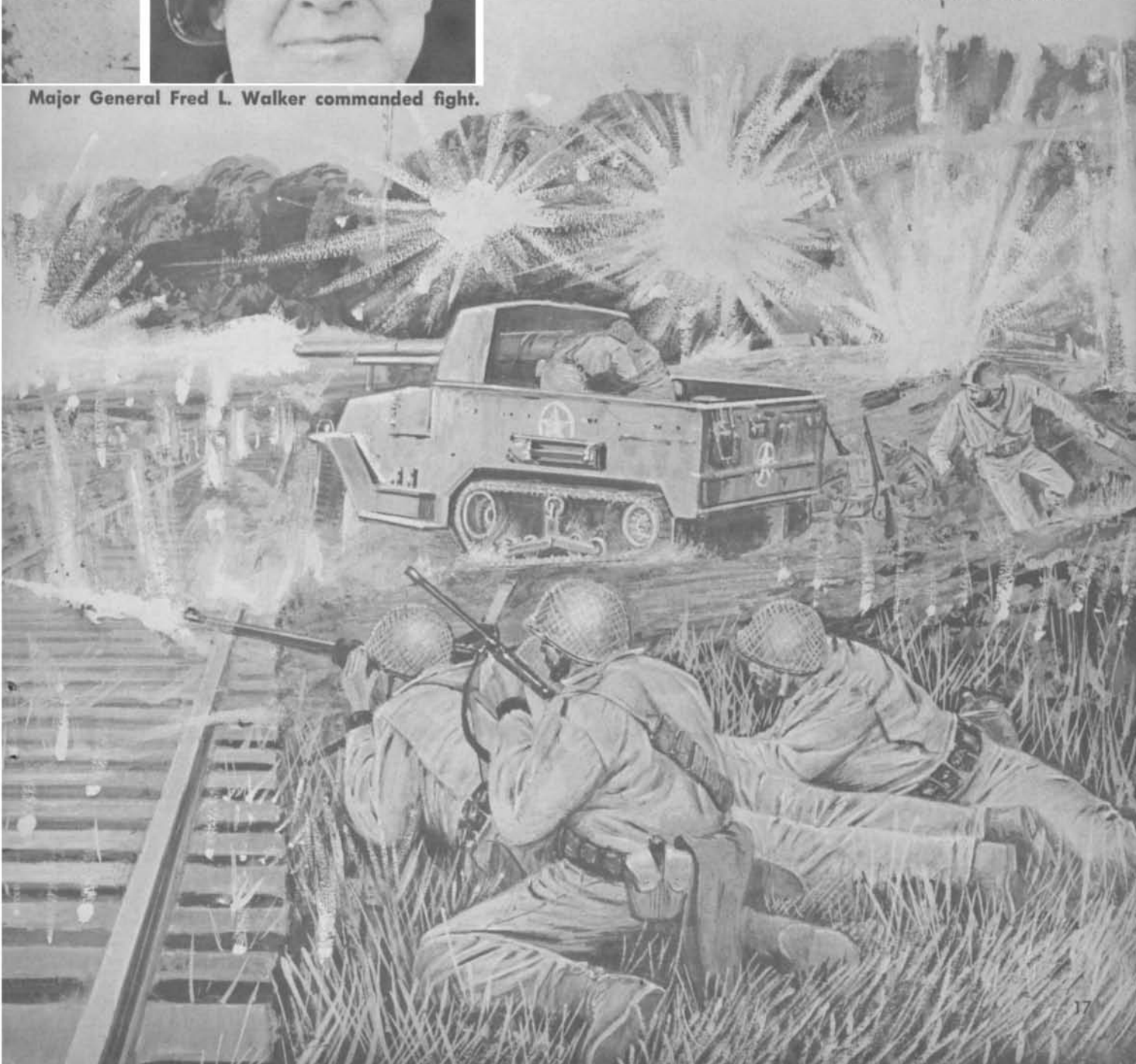
A few hours after Eisenhower's announcement, an air attack on the convoy's left flank had brought the Navy to its battle stations, sending troops filing below deck. The clatter and rattle of the Navy's big guns mixed and mingled with the explosion of bombs dropped by German bombers. Only one destroyer reported any damage, while one German bomber suffered a direct hit and plunged flaming into the sea.

U P I



Major General Fred L. Walker commanded fight.

ILLUSTRATED BY HERB MOTT



SALERNO—BEACHHEAD IN HELL

CONTINUED

It was now obvious that the enemy knew something was afoot. Had the surprise invasion at Salerno been lost? There was still time for Lieutenant General Mark Wayne Clark, the tall Fifth Army commander, to change his mind and ask the Navy for a preliminary bombardment in the 36th Division sector to soften up the beach defenses.

Aboard the flagship U.S.S. *Samuel Chase*, Major General Fred L. Walker, who commanded the 36th, was going over last-minute briefings with his staff officers. Walker was fifty-seven years old, but a surprisingly

young-looking man who would never be guessed to be over forty-five. As he spread out the latest air photographs of the beaches and the surrounding high ground at Salerno, Walker spoke softly; he was never a man to raise his voice.

"This is a three-gun artillery battery which was set up by the Italians along the railroad, opposite our beaches," he said. "Our Intelligence reports it to be obsolete and unmanned. If gun crews do exist, it is within rifle range of our first wave, who can drive them off."

Walker had reports that the German 16th Panzer (Tank) Division was in the area, but there was indication that they would not be strong in any sector. Too, Italian soldiers in the landing sector would not be there.

The British, which included the 46th (Pine Tree) Division and the 56th (London) Division, were to land



First wave of Texans hit the beach under German fire.

to the north, and Walker pointed out that at this sector the only naval bombardment would begin sometime before the 36th would hit shore.

"This should definitely indicate the north beaches as the main landing place, and our troops will be able to reach the beach as a surprise and move quickly inland," he said.

One of his staff officers asked pointedly, "Are we going into Salerno stark naked?"

Walker turned from his maps and walked to the peek-size window. It was already blackout time and a few blue lights gave the only illumination.

His voice was barely audible over the constant *thump-thump-thump* of the ship's engines. "I have requested to Admiral Hall that no preliminary naval bombardment be fired in our sector. Despite the slight air attack on us

hours ago, I am going along with General Clark for an all-out tactical surprise."

Walker wasn't altogether pleased with his decision, but he felt it had to be made. For one thing, the 36th Division commander had no confidence that the Navy could coordinate a successful bombardment with the time of the landing of his first waves, which during darkness could result in confusion among his inexperienced troops.

ON the decks, men sat around idle. Some read pamphlets issued by Allied Headquarters telling them how to behave in Italy. Others wrote letters home, many with the hopes they would be home by Christmas now that the war was nearly over. Infantrymen checked their rifles, and made sure they had some dry socks in their packs to wear after reaching *(Continued on page 46)*



WIDE WORLD

SALERNO: BEACHHEAD IN HELL *Continued from page 19*

the beach. Those who couldn't sleep lay in their bunks thinking of the girl they left at home, or the curvacious Italian *signorina* they would be sure to meet along the road to Rome.

At one hour to midnight, the call to general quarters whooped loudly, and the night air filled with sounds of the ships' winches moving small landing craft to positions for lowering.

"It'll be a cinch," the square-jawed sergeant said. "Won't last a month." He hunched his pack higher on his shoulders and counted off his squad.

Staff Sergeant James A. Whitaker was a typical Texan, from San Antonio. Whitaker, like the famous Colonel William B. Travis at the Alamo, was cocksure of his fighting ability.

It was one minute past midnight—0001 hours. The loudspeakers blared instructions to load, and the whoop-whoop-whoop of the ship's sirens broke the stillness of the night.

"God! With all that hooting, how in the hell are we going to surprise anyone?" an officer cried out, unnerved at the Navy's noisy habit of sounding sirens loudly every time they were about to move.

At the signal, the first wave of GIs scrambled down the swinging ladder ropes in full battle dress.

A British naval officer came down from the bridge of his troop carrier to see his American visitors off, in keeping with the long tradition of the Royal Navy. He looked down on the little huddled group.

"Good-bye," he shouted, "and good . . ." His words faded in the growl of the craft's engines.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward D. McCall stood at the front of his assault craft and felt the cold, stinging spray as it cleared the swells. It felt better than in the ship's hold, where the pitching was magnified. Nevertheless, he was still nauseated. As a land soldier, he was a little tired of the sea. McCall commanded the Third Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, which would be among the first American troops to land on continental Europe.

As his craft continued to circle with the rest, McCall lost sight of the great armada of ships—450 of them he had been told—which had brought them safely through the night and now lay calm and unmolested ten miles from the beaches.

THE shore was a vague, dark line on the surface of the waters ahead. A few hundred yards off the coast, tiny scout landing crafts had taken up their positions in front of the four landing beaches—Red,

Green, Yellow and Blue, so designated by the blinking color lights.

Lieutenant (j.g.) Grady Holloway took his position at a point some 400 yards off Green beach by taking a fix on the ancient medieval watchtower at Paestum, which could be seen dimly in the dark. He kept a close look at his watch. It was 0130 hours. Since it would take the first wave two hours to sneak into shore from where they were circling, he began blinking his green light.

For a moment, Holloway thought he could distinguish German trucks moving on the mainland. The faint sounds of clanking tracks sent an icy-cold trickle down his spine. Those weren't trucks; they were tanks! His fears were suddenly confirmed.

There were Germans on the beaches.

Action soon became more evident on the mainland. German searchlights suddenly burst forth from the shore, scanning the beaches and the water. Infantrymen of the 36th, inexperienced in these matters, were certain that they had been spotted. A young soldier quietly sobbed from a bad attack of nerves, trying to hold back the tears that streaked down his freshly-shaved cheeks.

"Hell, if the Navy is as bad at poker as they are at trying to find land, we'll surely get lost . . . probably wind up in Naples first," an officer quipped, gripping his shoulder.

Just as he coaxed a smile on the boy's pale face, orange flashes followed by thundering explosions echoed along Salerno Bay. It was the barrage of naval gun fire in the British sector to the left. The columns of assault craft carrying the 36th steadily approached the beaches with Navy helmsmen keeping on course by the red lights in the stern of each vessel. H-Hour—0330 was now moments away.

Whatever lay ahead, there was certainly no turning back. The die was cast, the players about to learn their parts. The GIs of the untried 36th Division crouched grimly within the thin steel walls of their LCVs, poised like race horses at the starting gate.

None, but the most hardened stomachs were unmoved by the pitching and tossing of the assault crafts,

U. S. ARMY PHOTO



Crewman rests while buddy is ready to defend 36th's attacking companies.

and the men were becoming weak from it. Chilled by the wet spray, cramped by immobility, weakened by seasickness—a hell of a way to go into battle for the first time!

H-Hour struck, quickly and inexorably. With traditional American precision, the leading craft of the 142nd Regiment hit land head-on at 3:30 A.M. along Red beach. Quickly the steel jaws of the LCVF opened. The donkey engines began to putter.

A sudden, single burst of machine gun fire ripped through the chilling morning air before the steel door could touch down. It was followed by the crescendoing roar of more machine guns, the crash of mortars and ear-piercing scream of 88-millimeter shells, splattering the dark beaches and water as troops slogged inland.

The LCVF carrying Staff Sergeant Quillian H. McMitchen and his men had not even struck land when fragments of an 88 shell crashed into their craft, tearing into McMitchen's chest. He whirled into the arms of his men, writhing in pain.

"Sarge is hit!"

"Medic! Medic!"

"What's wrong with this bitchin' door? We've got to get out of this death trap! Tell the Navy there's a war out there!"

The ramp had stuck upon reaching the beach and would not drop. In spite of his bleeding wounds, Sergeant McMitchen lunged forward and kicked and pounded the ramp with his boots. His men joined in until the door shook and dropped. As the sergeant led his group from the craft, a burst of machine gun fire caught him at the waist. He spun to the beach, his face buried in the sand.

Southward, along the Yellow and Blue beaches, the 141st had landed its first wave and fanned across the sand dunes, working their way through wire obstacles and mines, when intense machine gun fire pinned them down. The 88s and mortar fire caught the second wave of Texans by surprise.

Private James Logan, nicknamed "Lu Lu" because he hailed from Luling, Texas, was on the second wave as it waded ashore on Yellow beach. No sooner had he stepped on shore than a splash of earth erupted forty yards in front of him. A concussion from an overhead blast

of an 88 sent him reeling into the sand, eyes closed. When he looked up he saw two men had been hit, one on each side of him, neither more than fifteen feet away.

He began to feel an increasing breathlessness, an almost unbearable tension of waiting for the next shell. It came seconds later, rustling at first, then suddenly swelling into a screech and bursting with a blast that shook the air and crushed his eardrums.

By now, the enemy's artillery had moved out past the beaches and was falling in on the incoming landing crafts. Logan had a feeling of being naked and helpless on the beach, with nothing to do but keep moving and hope like hell he wasn't next.

On the beaches, infantrymen were still pinned down by machine guns, and snipers who worked from behind the protective Paestum Tower. In scattered positions, German tanks pounded away. Men against tanks! How long could they hold on without being pushed out to sea? It would be hours before the artillery boys with anti-tank weapons would make it ashore. The infantryman's objective was a railroad some 2,500 yards inshore, where the division had pre-planned to organize and push forward quickly to the hills.

In the darkness, a loudspeaker blared out and an obviously German voice cried out in English: "Come on in and surrender. We have you covered!"

Detached parties of soldiers, separated from leaders, charged up the sand with individually-initiated battle cries, mostly obscene.

The Texans ran straight into a tornado of bullets. The Germans had them in deathly ambush, as if they had known all along that the Americans were coming. Snipers from the Paestum Tower continued to pick off the GIs as they struggled out of ditches and other means of cover.

AT the first crack of dawn, groups of German Mark IV tanks appeared from behind buildings and brick walls, firing as they came. The lightly-armed Texans, still unequipped with anti-tank guns, took refuge in houses or in drainage canals.

Colonel Richard J. Werner, the mustached commander of the 141st Regimental Combat Team, grabbed his Cannon Company commander, Captain Fred A. Booth, with instructions to return to the beach and

locate the sector's naval gun observer, Ensign Alistain Semple.

"For Christ's sake, have Semple radio a message for naval gun support. This ain't no goddamn surprise invasion any more. We're being swept back out to sea!"

Captain Booth raced to the water's edge where he found Ensign Semple.

"Tell that Navy brass of yours to pour it on," Booth shouted.

Naval beach officers were busy shouting, too, trying to sort out a fantastic muddle of vehicles and men that was suddenly piling up at the water's edge. The third assault waves were coming ashore, only to find the first two waves were still pinned down on the beaches and working slowly in their advance. Frantically, the Navy officers urged the troops to "get up and go!" so that the landing crafts could be unloaded and sent back to their mother ships to reload. Offshore, burning landing crafts were drifting around while others which had received direct hits were sunk, their bows emerging through the shallow waters like tombstones in a cemetery. With the third wave, the two-and-one-half-ton amphibious "Dukws" carrying artillery came ashore with much-needed 105-mm Howitzers of the 133rd Field Artillery Battalion.

Captain Ross Ayers of Waxahachie, Texas, directed two 105s to shore two, but to his dismay he watched several other Dukws carrying the rest of his artillery turn back out to sea. Three 75-mm self-propelled cannons also came in on the third wave in the 141st's sector, but one LCM carrying one of the cannons was turned back to the Navy, due to the heavy shelling. The other two 75s were unloaded, and Lieutenant Colonel Carol C. Smith, first battalion commander of the 141st, tried to get them into position.

Sergeant Guy E. Spencer grabbed one of the guns and with his crew began to pull it off the beaches. It struck a mine and the blast sent the gun reeling over on its side. Spencer and his men lay nearby, wounded and unable to crawl for cover. The second 75 was maneuvered into the sand dunes safely and, within minutes, Lieutenant Clair F. Carpenter had his highly-trained crew sighting down at several advancing Mark IV tanks. Their first shot was a direct hit, the tank blowing apart like a boiler com-



Chaplain of 1st Battalion, 141 Infantry Regiment, covers one of the bodies during evacuation of American dead to 36th Division cemetery at Paestum.

ing apart at its seams. Hastily, they tried to reload, but an 88 shell crashed nearby and shrapnel smashed into their gun sight, knocking it out of commission.

Carpenter, non-native "Texan" from Omaha, Nebraska, charged across the beach under enemy fire to the disabled 75mm gun which had been blown to bits by the mine. He checked its gun sight and found it was undamaged. Again he footed it quickly across the sandy beach to his crew. Corporal Edgar L. Blackburn of Garland, Texas, tried to replace the new gun sight. From somewhere, a machine gunner found his mark and Blackburn crashed down to the dunes. Carpenter grabbed the sight and tried himself. Another spurt of machine-gun fire caught him, and he fell, severely wounded.

PPRIVATE Logan could not find his Company One buddies as he took a position along the bank of an irrigation canal, some 800 yards inland. Behind him he watched a few of his own infantrymen trying to cross the embankments of the canal, making perfect targets against the skyline. They were being badly beaten back as machine guns swept every inch of the ground above him.

Nearby, Logan could hear a German machine gunner pounding away. He peeked over the top of his embankment and saw the smoke and

dust billowing from behind a rock wall 200 yards ahead. He waited for someone to give the signal to run, but he was all alone. Instinctively, he crawled out of his protection and raced toward the wall.

Halfway across, the machine-gunner belched bullets at him, spraying Logan with dirt and rock as he dived headlong behind a protective hedge-row. Breathless, he again peered through the brush and just in time to see three drab figures leap through a gap in the wall with bayonets fixed on the end of their rifles.

Logan brought his M-1 into position and popped off three rounds as the Germans came within twenty yards of him. The trio spun in a quick, twisting dance of death and fell to earth. Logan waited for the machine gun to bark back at him, but there was only silence. Then he dashed headlong again, across the exposed ground and past the three dead bodies of Germans toward the wall, his heart pounding with his feet, his vision juggled with his running.

Brrddt-t-t . . . brr-rap!! Ripping machine-gun fire spewed the sand around him and tore apart the molecules of the air about him.

LOGAN lunged the last few feet, to the rock wall, miraculously untouched. He was now within an arm's reach of the enemy.

His heart pounded, partly from the

running, partly from knowing that live Germans were on the other side of that wall.

He had never seen a live German before; he wondered what they looked like. Crawling alongside the wall, inching closer and closer to the ear-splitting rattle of the German machine gun, Logan went so slowly he wondered if he was moving at all. He felt his auditory nerves flush to anger and suddenly he felt he had maneuvered directly opposite the weapon.

With an expertly executed leap, he sailed over the wall, his rifle snapping loose the rounds from his clip. Two German gunners cried out in surprise, then in sharp pain as they sprawled lifeless from the gun.

A half dozen other German soldiers suddenly sprang from the wall and, with panic written on their faces, started a retreating run. Logan grabbed the machine gun and swung it around at the fleeing Germans. With the remaining belt of ammunition, the gun burst loose like a Texas rattlesnake. Four more Germans whirled to the ground, dead.

When it had clicked off its final round, Logan grabbed the gun, gripped by a sudden second breath, and smashed the weapon against the rock wall until it was thoroughly broken and no longer useful.

Logan suddenly became limp with exhaustion and leaned against the rock wall waiting for his buddies to catch up with him and move on out toward the railroad. A bit dazed by his actions, his thoughts turned to a possible promotion after this bit of handiwork. The possibility of receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor never entered his mind. It was just another troublesome German machine gun out of the way.

German tanks began their attack, rolling out of their protective cover all along the beachhead. Sergeant Whitaker had led his platoon of Company B, 141st Infantry, along a shallow gully when he heard the sounds of engines ahead. He took his field glasses and made out the faint outlines of tanks, moving out from behind the buildings where they had been hiding.

"I think we have company. Tanks!" he told his men.

"Goddamn. Those Jerries got all the tanks. We ain't got a damn tank on shore yet," one of his men yelled.

Whitaker checked his submachine gun as he saw the turret hatches of the lead tank slam down. The long,

wicked tube of the tank's gun swung toward him.

"Here it comes! Get down!" The shell screamed over their heads and burst behind them.

"Commence firing! Commence firing!" Whitaker shouted.

His men began to put out a ragged volume of fire as he raced toward the approaching tank, running low but fully exposed as he swung his sub-machine gun into action and fired into the small aperture of the tank. It lurched, then stalled. The tank machine gunner swept the ground as Whitaker raced for cover. He felt a searing pain across his legs, and they gave way beneath him. He tried to move them but there was no response.

The Mark IV started up again as the gunner kept Whitaker's men pinned down in their ditches. The Texas sergeant grabbed another clip of ammunition and slammed it home into his Tommy gun. His weapon came alive again, recoiling with each spurt, and the tank swung itself sideways and moved off in another direction. His platoon had been saved.

A curtain of darkness descended upon Whitaker but his rudimentary awareness came back a few seconds later. He was still stretched out on the ground, his legs split open by the machine-gun fire. A couple of feet away lay his helmet which had been gashed in at least two places, one hole at the front and another ripping through the side.

There was no pain; no feeling at all. His shocked perceptions groped for an understanding of what had happened. He saw the motion of figures of men running at a half crouch, zig-zagging through shell fire. He knew there must be danger, and he tried to yell for help. His voice, once strong, was weak.

He struggled to drag himself away. Dropping his helmet, he stubbornly picked it up, only to have it drop again. A red drapery of blood blurred his vision but he found the helmet again. He was determined to preserve it; he didn't know why. He found a well dug-out place to fall into as an oncoming shell whistled overhead. He saw the hole had been well-prepared, and he realized that only a German soldier would have had the time to dig such an elaborate defense. He half-smiled, because the Germans were not there any more.

It was 0755 hours when General

Walker and his party approached Red Beach. Here, neither Army engineers nor Navy shore parties had been able to cope with the vast amount of supplies that had been continually hauled off from the vessels.

Close inshore, the water was littered with abandoned equipment, some damaged, some not. Bulldozers and tractors had not yet come ashore to drag the material into the shelter of the sand dunes. Walker was at least pleased to note that the dead bodies of his American troops had been removed, but discarded helmets, a ripped-open boot all rammed home that the invasion was not a pleasure trip and that Naples was still miles and days ahead of them.

Enemy shells, though sporadic, continued to sail into the shallow water as Walker started for the railway. At the same time, Private Leonard L. Roy, driver of Walker's radio jeep, was driving his vehicle off the LCVP when an 88 shell screamed overhead and burst, sending Walker's party scurrying for cover.

Roy received a direct hit by shrapnel, and the boy's scream told Walker that he would have to foot it the rest of the day.

WALKING along the railroad, toward a tobacco warehouse where he was to set up his initial command post, Walker passed two abandoned German radio sets. He was amused to hear German military commands coming through the speakers with no German on the receiving end.

The large warehouse had been deserted by the Italians, although stalks of tobacco still hung from its rafters. Walker immediately set up his operation.

All of his staff officers were with him except Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Ives, his G-1, whose voice crackled over the shortwave. He had climbed into the bell tower of a church on the outskirts of Paestum.

"It's pretty hot up here, and I don't mean the weather. The Krauts have got into a cave on Mount Soprano, near the top of the peak. They can observe everything. We seem to be holding on, but they're tossing everything our way. With those Krauts looking down from the mountain, I feel just like a hunk of bacteria in a bottle . . ."

He cut himself off quickly, but his voice crackled again, this time several octaves higher.

"Tanks coming! German tanks are heading your way . . . There must be a dozen!"

WALKER could see a cloud of dust a hundred yards down the road, unmistakably tanks barreling down upon them. He led his headquarters staff away from the tobacco warehouse and into a ditch below the Paestum road. From the beach area, a two and a half-ton Dukws appeared and artillery men of the 155th Field Artillery Battalion hastily hauled out its 105mm howitzer and swung it around into position. From another direction, Technical Sergeant John Whitaker of Cannon Company, 143d Infantry, was heading his 75mm self-propelled mounted weapon to his regimental command post a short distance from the tobacco warehouse.

Whitaker's crew scored the first hit. The tank was lost in a cloud of dust.

Moments later, the 75 claimed its second victim, sending it waywardless into a ravine. Several Germans leaped from the flames and black smoke gushed from within its steel walls. The attacking tanks became disorganized, firing point-blank, unable to see what was ahead.

For Whitaker and his crew, the job of junking German armor seemed easy. Within half an hour, already five Mark IV tanks sat smoking, motionless in the wake of the blistering battle.

When the tanks retreated, Walker approached Sergeant Whitaker and his crew, praising them for their well-done marksmanship. Then he turned to Whitaker, a National Guard veteran of fifteen years from Fort Worth.

"From right now soldier, I commission you a second lieutenant, U. S. Army. A credit to the fine state you come from, Whitaker," Walker said. He requested that Whitaker keep his gun crew near the division command post to prevent other such attacks, then he went back to the warehouse.

Upon returning, General Walker found Lieutenant Colonel John N. (Pete) Green, 132nd Field Artillery commander, busily listening to his batteries chatter on the shortwave. Suddenly, a voice cried out: "Holy heaven, Joe—Germans! I can't get a true fix. They're all over the goddamn place. Crawling like ants."

Another voice commanded: "B Battery, stand by to fire for effect."

Colonel Green grabbed the radio's handset and retorted, "Battery, hell! Make that battalion!"

There was a bit of quietness on the radio. It was obvious that the radio operators on the listening end were trying to place the mystery voice. It didn't take long to recognize Pete Green's gusty growl.

"Yessir!" came the reply.

Their objective was Hill 386, a projection running northwest from Mount Soprano and ending abruptly in a cliff just above the junction of the roads to Capaccio and Rocca d'Aspide. The hill was covered with small trees, sloping steeply downward. Somewhere on that slope, the Germans were dug in. From the stubble of vegetation, General Walker could see a far-spreading cloud of smoke rising. Large, rapidly springing bursts of smoke leaped from the woods as shells struck, sometimes setting fire to the trees. The division's big 4.2-inch mortars were giving the Germans hell.

Near Hill 386, Captain Zerk Robertson of Merkel, Texas, advanced a part of his company cautiously through the ravines choked with rubble and splintered timber, and along hedges spattered with strips of flesh and uniforms, where the 143rd Infantry had not centered their movement. Snipers caused the men to duck for cover, slowing them in their advance to gain control of the hill.

Captain Robertson spotted one sniper in the window of a small evacuated farm building, and he turned to his top NCO, Technical Sergeant

Charles E. Kelly, a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who had a habit of sniffing out trouble.

"Kelly! Get that Thompson of yours and teach that Kraut a lesson," Robertson ordered. With a smile emitting from his polished white teeth, Kelly crawled away with his Tommy gun.

IN a few minutes, Robertson and his men heard Sergeant Kelly's sub-machine gun rip off a few rounds. Puffs of dust spouted from the wall. Another spurt, and another . . . and the puffs moved inexorably, steadily up the building to the window, inch by inch. The sniper crouching in the window was blasted out.

Robertson again moved his men along, nearing the base of the hill. A hundred yards ahead of them, they could see German helmets moving along a ditch. His men lay down to regroup. All was ready. There was only one thing left to do.

"Fix bayonets!"

The command seemed to bring the entire group to life. There was the nasty snick of the bayonets locking home.

Captain Robertson fingered his Bren, looked to the right and left, then moved his men out in a brisk walk. He glanced to his right and saw Sergeant Kelly, licking his lips, grinning a dead grin.

They broke into a trot, a run, a mad charge, screaming, yelling. Fifty yards . . . forty yards . . . thirty . . . twenty . . . and, with a wild yell, Kelly was over and in the ditch.

The trench was ten feet deep. He hit the bottom with a crash and saw gray-green figures. He squeezed the trigger of his sub-machine gun.

A jam! In his frantic frenzy, Kelly tried to shake out the bum cartridge.

A voice cried out, "What in the goddamn hell are you doing?"

Sweat poured from Kelly's forehead. They had charged some of their own men of "L" Company, with an assortment of Germans varying from the very dead to those petrified with fright.

Several hundred yards away, Robertson heard a thunderous cough.

"Our tank!" someone shouted.

Sure, enough, a Sherman tank appeared in the clearing.

The 36th Reconnaissance Squadron had made it ashore.

BY nightfall, Captain Robertson and the 143rd Infantry were in control of the southeast slope of Mount Soprano, and a vital stretch of the road leading to the plain stretching out to the critical Sele River. Units of the 142nd occupied the plain just south of the river, as well as the high ground around Hill 140, an average distance of five miles from the beaches.

Supply dumps had been set up on the beaches, where the engineers had labored efficiently and tirelessly under constant fire.

The hours of confusion had passed. Anti-aircraft batteries were in position, and communications were finally working.

The 36th Division from Texas, baptized into battle, had reached its initial objective; a beachhead had been secured.

Sergeant Whitaker lay on his litter, waiting to be taken back to a ship for medical treatment of his tangled legs. The war for the San Antonio soldier was over. It had lasted one day.

He turned to the bandaged soldier next to him who was bleeding from the nose and mouth.

"Where you from, kid?" Whitaker asked.

There was no answer. A medic walked up and crouched alongside the wounded, speechless soldier. He fanned away the hordes of giant mosquitoes attempting to feast on the boy's open wounds. Then the aide man stopped short, and lifted the eyelids several times, before turning to Whitaker.

"He was from Texas, Sarge." ■