

Notes from Normandy

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ARMY TALKS

EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

Notes from Normandy

"It is desired that, consistent with operational requirements, group discussions, through the medium ARMY TALKS . . . be held in all units within this command, using one hour of training time each week . . . unit commanders will conduct an orientation program, using not less than one hour training time a week . . . presentation of this material is a command function. . . . A company officer will be present at each discussion, whether or not he is the discussion leader. . . ."

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL EISENHOWER.

(Extract from letter ETO, 30 April 1944, AG 352/2 OpGA,
Subject: Education in Military and Current Affairs.)

WHAT you've been taught at Fort Benning and Camp Blanding and Fort Ord, or wherever you did your training, is paying off in Normandy today.

Our men are pushing and pushing—the Jerry can't cope with what we have.

But the terrain is new. It's not Georgia or Florida or California. It isn't Tunisia, Sicily or Italy.

It's a new kind of country—and a new kind of war. The only old thing about it is the enemy—and even he is up to new tricks.

Here are some of the lessons we're learning in Normandy. They come from the officers, non-coms, and enlisted men who are fighting there. To get them ARMY TALKS went right to the front lines, to the hospitals, the supply dumps, the CPs and the fox holes.

They're not to be taken as gospel and doctrine. They're nothing more nor less than what men and officers recently in combat say. These are the comments of some after they have met up with the Germans.



Hedgerow Fighting

Sgt. Infantry : Take a look at this country here. What do you see? You see hedgerows and more hedgerows—the whole place is chopped up into little fields, each divided from the other by a high, bushy hedgerow. Well, the Germans shoot at those hedges. They dig special entrances in them, and then zero in on those holes. You can fox them, though. Just make your own hole and with a little luck and skill, you'll surprise the Huns and lay it on them.

Cpl. Infantry : At first those hedgerows had us stopped, but we caught on, and here's the answer. Take the bipod off your light machine gun. Put on asbestos gloves, then spray those hedgerows a couple of times and lay it on good whenever you think there's a Jerry behind one.

Sgt. Infantry : We found out we don't shoot enough. We were taught only to shoot what we see, and in the desert it worked out fine. But here all you see is hedges. So we're shooting into whatever area we want to

move into—we spray it with plenty of lead. Jerry hates it—it really has him dizzy.

Sgt. Infantry : We lie behind the hedge until we see Germans. Then we pin them down with machine guns. Once they're pinned down, we give them the old mortars and pretty soon they're all either dead, or ready to surrender. When the going gets that tough, they surrender.



Lt. Col. Infantry : Here's how we've learned to handle this hedgerow problem : The Jerries usually have machine guns posted in the corners of the field. We plaster the four corners with two 81 mm. mortars. Then we spray the forward hedgerow with Piat machine guns. Then we send in two squads of automatic riflemen, one up each side of the field, to mop up what's left. Generally, there's not much left.

Sgt. Infantry : Keep your rifle ready for action. That means don't sling it over your shoulder and don't lean it against a tree five feet away. Coming up from the beach, a Kraut stuck his head up five feet away from me and fired. He missed—I shot at him, but my safety was on and by the time I was set to shoot again, he was gone.

Have Your Rifle Ready—Squeeze It

Lt. Infantry : I don't say the boys should all go around with their safeties off—let the old men, the veterans, do as they please. The new men had better keep on the safety. But just remember this : Carry your rifle at port ; have it where you can use it, quick ! You're a hunter, see—you're hunting all the time—and you're apt to get just one chance. Be ready, that's all I say. And that goes at all times, except on a regular route march.

Sgt. Infantry : The best shooting is at 50 to 100 yards. There isn't much long range stuff here.

Lt. Infantry : Let the boys have plenty of ammo and let them go gun crazy. Shoot your M1 into any suspected area. Shoot wherever you think they are. Don't let yourself be pinned down with one shot—keep shooting and move a little to the right or left after each shot. I generally fired standing in this country—but when I'm in a clear space, a prone position is best—with a hasty sling.

Pfc. Infantry : At first I was shy. I didn't know the ropes and I hated to make any noise. When I heard something, I hesitated and didn't do anything. But now I know the score. I'm out to kill every German I can get. The American soldier has to learn to hate : he has to learn

to kill right away. Don't ask any questions, shoot and keep shooting. That isn't a license to trigger-happy guys to shoot at everything all the time. I mean when your judgment tells you it's a Jerry, don't hesitate !

Sgt. Infantry : The big thing in marksmanship is alertness. You've got to pick them up fast and squeeze it off in a hurry. Jerry understands this cover and concealment business—you've got to be on your toes and wide awake.

Pfc. Infantry : Watch your rifle or carbine like a baby. I clean it every chance I get. Just a few drops in the chamber keeps it okay—don't put in too much oil—it "goofs" it off. Keep the gas chamber dry—don't put any oil in it.

Sgt. Infantry : Even more important, keep your ammo clean. When you lay your belt down, dirt gets in and you can't see it. Then, when a bullet goes into the chamber, there's dirt on it, and you get a misfire. Wipe your bullets off with a tooth brush, or patch, or a rag. Get the dirt off somehow.



Sgt. Infantry : Want to know why old soldiers live—and the replacements need to be replaced and replaced ? I'll tell you. Old soldiers know what enemy weapons can do. They have plenty of respect for them. They don't expose themselves needlessly. They aren't afraid to be afraid—they don't act brave—they duck and run for cover when their eyes and ears give the warning. They know when to be alert—and when to relax. They travel light and fight light. They hit the dirt and don't run wild or freeze so they're helpless. They let the enemy get close so they can hit him. They aren't trigger happy. They don't bunch up. They look where they're going—up, down and around, not just at their feet like rookies. They keep doing something all the time in combat—they don't just do nothing.

What Normandy Vets Think Of Jerry

Lt. Infantry : The Jerry is a queer fighter. He fires sometimes, just to build up his confidence. Some of our guys are trigger happy, too. It doesn't pay. In this country, pour it on when you smell a target—but don't just shoot to keep up your own spirits.

Col. Medical Corps : Any time you're tempted to sell the Germans short, think this one over : Do you know how many oxygen masks there are in the German army ? *One per man!* Their gas masks are built so that all you have to do is flip a gadget, attach an oxygen tank, and the man

can breathe. These guys won't be beaten by our under-estimating them. They're smart. They're tough, and they're plenty wicked.

Pfc. Infantry : Germans try not to close in with you. When you shoot at them give it to them, straight and plenty—and the ones you don't hit will move out, usually.

Cpl. Infantry : If you give a Nazi a chance to pull a fast one, he'll pull it. Stay back when they begin to surrender—let them come to you. Once in a while there is a fanatic among them who takes advantage of the



white flag. One came with a white flag in one hand, and a potato masher in the other. He pitched the grenade at us when he got close enough. He missed—we didn't.

Pvt. Infantry : One of them yelled to me in English, "Friend!"—and let us have it.

Capt. Infantry : The thing to remember is—there are lots of Germans and non-Germans in their Army. Some of them are fair and square fighters—and some of them are tricky and dirty. The safe thing is—take no chances. We want as many prisoners as we can get—we don't want to discourage prisoners by shooting at them when they try to give up. What you should do is let them come to you—but don't expose yourself by going out to them.

It's A Mobile War: Keep Moving

Sgt. Infantry : The more aggressive you are, the better the results. Don't putter and piddle around. If you let them get the initiative, they keep it. Keep them off balance. Shoot and keep shooting. Move, don't freeze up.

Sgt. Infantry : If you don't keep your eyes open, you'll get lead between them. No matter how tired you get, keep your eyes open! You're fighting experienced, mean killers—don't forget that.

Pfc. Infantry : Take a look at that German radio we captured. On the dial are the names of stations to tune in on—Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Leipsig, Stuttgart, but no London—or any town outside Germany. We can listen to anything—they had to listen to just their own stations.

Lt. Infantry : Get out at the main approach the enemy is apt to use. Get two men there, one to cover the other. Keep them a little apart—and that way when something happens, they're set to act.

Capt. Artillery : Locate yourself mentally by inspection of the country. The maps we have are a big help too. They're 1/25,000—and that's the doughboys' map. Hedgerows are little black lines on the 1/25,000 map, and you can easily pick up all the trails and roads.

Cpl. Infantry : The Jerry doesn't like to work at night. It's a good time to go out and get him. You can pick up his position better at night than by day—just follow the line of the tracers from his machine guns. By day it's hard to see him because of his smokeless powder.

Artillery Is Footsoldier's Best Friend

Lt. Infantry : Hug your own artillery fire. Get right behind its bursts and follow it. Don't let it get too far ahead of you—if you hit the Boche after the artillery, you can nail him. But if you give him a chance to snap out of it, your work is hard.

Capt. Infantry : These kids of ours don't have any fear of small arms fire—but our artillery scares some of them. That's wrong. A doughboy's best friend is his artillery. He should lean against its fire—stay no farther away than 50 or 75 yards behind it. A few chunks may fall on us, but that's not as bad as we'd get from Jerry. The other thing to do is—spread out!

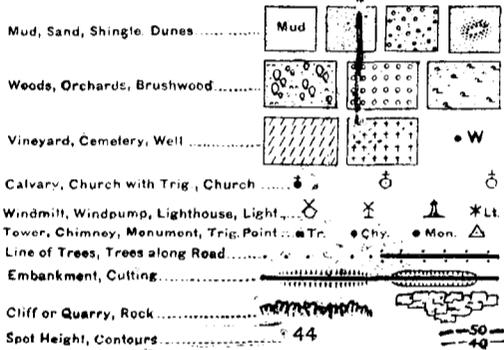
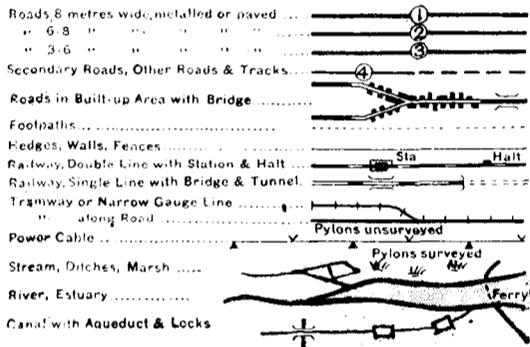
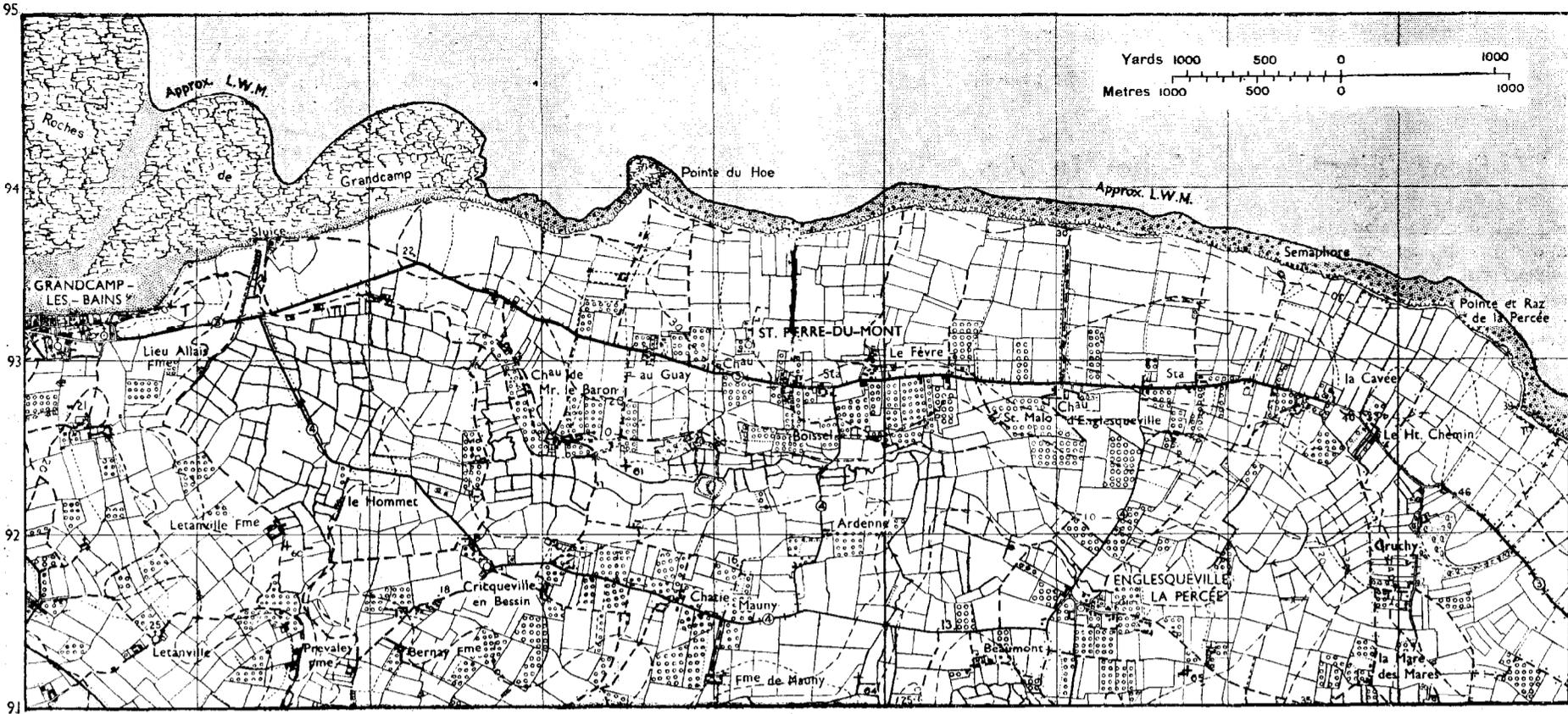
Col. Infantry : One of our big problems in this kind of country is locating an enemy that's fired at you. We do it by the "crack and thump method." First you hear the crack as the bullet passes you. Then you hear the thump of the muzzle blast of the gun that fired. The important thing is—look for the thump, not the crack. If the bullet is going to hit you, you won't even hear it, so no use worrying about the sound it makes. But listen for that thump, and you have your target narrowed down. The crack and thump method works with everything except their mortar. Only a very experienced man can spot the mortars, and the best way is to get to an observation post and watch for them.

Notes On Mines



Col. Infantry : I'd also like to stress enemy mines—particularly anti-personnel mines. When you come to a minefield start making a path through it. The fields themselves are usually clearly marked. Wherever you suspect a mine stand off away from it at a good distance and fire at it to explode it. You can generally spot them—all except the trip wire types. Be on the look-out for the wires—from a few inches to a foot off the ground. The

Here the Atlantic Wall was Smashed



On the morning of June 6, 1944, elements of the famous U.S. First Division assaulted this strip of beach in Normandy. Through mine-strewn waters they pushed ashore, in the face of murderous fire from the enemy's emplaced defenses on the sand ridge beyond. Seldom have soldiers been called upon to fight as these men of the Fighting First did. Clinging desperately to a scant seven-yard beachhead at first, they rallied in spite of losses to hurl the enemy from his strongpoints and on a road into the interior.

ammunition and pioneer platoon of the battalion generally stays right out ahead. Those men know the mines and mark them—they've taken out hundreds already in this campaign alone.

Cpl. Infantry : You can generally see Jerry's mines. They lived near their own mines so they're careful to mark them. Mines needn't stop you. There are "Achtung Minen" signs up all over the country. There are more signs than mines here.

Some Tips From Medics In Action

Col. Airborne Division : I say give the devil his due. The German will take advantage of you every time he can—but I have never seen him fire at our medics if he sees the Red Cross brassard on their arms. I think soldiers who report that Germans are using their medics as ammunition carriers are probably dreaming. War isn't a pink tea, and the Germans know it. I like the way they bury their dead and evacuate their wounded. One evening we killed about a hundred of them. Next day there wasn't a trace of their dead in the area. They take care of our wounded and dead, too.

Capt. Medical Corps : I've held up the American tourniquet before my men and said, "This is a very dangerous weapon." Our boys watch it now. Our experience is that the tourniquet need very rarely be used. These youngsters have elastic blood vessels. Simple pressure dressings are all that's needed in by far the most cases.

Sgt. Medical Corps : Our boys in this outfit put sulfa powder on the wounds as quick as we can. Sulfa pills sometimes get puked up by a wounded man, but the powder stays on the job and cuts down infection.

MPs Are A Blessing, Men Reveal

Pvt. Infantry : I never thought I'd see the day when I'd say, "God bless the MPs," but I have to admit that the day has come. I used to spend my time dodging them—now I keep looking for them all the time—and wherever it's thickest an MP is there. In this country with a foreign lingo, and dozens of roads and paths all mixed up, I couldn't get around without the MPs to help me.

Sgt. Military Police : Tell the drivers to signal the direction they want to go—it will speed things up a lot on these crowded roads.

Pfc. Quartermaster : You've got to remember that these little French crossroads are crowded and sometimes shelled. Don't pick an intersection for a parking place or you'll hold up everybody behind you. If you want to ask the MP there a question pull on past before you pull over.

Lt. Military Police : It sure would make our lives easier if outfits would notify the nearest MP of their location whenever they move. We're

always being asked where such and such an outfit is. We all carry notebooks and pencils and if someone would tell us the code name and location of the CP or dump, or whatever it is, we could help stragglers and others who may be looking for it.

Notes On Supply

Sgt. Quartermaster : Tell them Joes to take only what they can carry. Forget all the love letters and stinky lotions. We left all that behind and we're taking with us only what we would have taken in the first place. Be sure you have blankets, raincoats, shelter half and extra socks and shoes. This is wet, cold country—if you dump that stuff, you'll be sorry. But the other junk—forget it.

A General Officer : A unit can go only as far as its supplies will allow. Supply discipline goes hand in hand with military discipline. To request more than you need is inefficient. To waste what you have is sabotage!

Pfc. Quartermaster : Watch your spare parts. In the old days back in training camp, a lost or damaged part meant KP or a bite out of your pay, but here it means nothing to shoot with when you need it most.

Pfc. Motor Pool : I got an idea that's worth millions of dollars—if only guys would listen to me. It's simply this : don't spill a drop of gas when you make a transfer. Use the funnel—pour it in easy—use both hands and get someone to help you if you can. But don't let the stuff run all over the floor of the car. When you see all the gas it takes to keep this show moving, you find out what it means to the gas it drops. They add up to tanker loads, but these Joes won't believe me—they won't until they need gas some day and don't have any.



Cpl. Military Police : Time and again I see drivers sitting around waiting for something to do—then they get orders to move and their trucks or jeeps stall and go dead. If only they'd move off their fannies and do a little first and second echelon jobs during stops and waiting periods, the stuff would be ready to roll all the time. Don't wait until your car is deadlined before you start with work on the motor and greasing.

Lt. Quartermaster : Who's going to pay for all these supplies we're using? Make no mistake about it, old cock, we are. If these dumb Joes knew the price of a box of 10 in 1 rations, they wouldn't toss half of it into a ditch.

the way I see some of them do, and that goes for all the other stuff they waste. It costs dough—and we're gonna have to pay for it.

Sgt. Quartermaster : In this man's war, every man is his own supply sergeant.

Capt. Quartermaster : The trouble is some of these outfits are afraid they won't get any supplies up front where they're going. So they hoard everything they can and when the order comes, they pile it all into their vehicles. The vehicles get overloaded and on these roads that means trouble. It's all a vehicle can do to carry its normal overload. Hoarding makes the problem worse.

Bring Warm Clothing—And Lots Of Ammo

Sgt. Infantry : I know the temptation to throw away heavy stuff like blankets and shoes. We had a hot spell and lots of the boys did it. But when it turned cold and wet you should have heard them holler for warm blankets and a change of kicks. We had to re-supply them. We used up gas, oil and transport, to say nothing of the stuff itself. It would have been better to have brought up more ammo.



Pvt. Artillery : You know why I think Jerry is going to lose the war? On account of all the stuff he's leaving in the ditches. There are enough gas masks, overcoats, pants, tools, helmets, shoe polish and other junk in the French fields to supply a young army. All that stuff is going to have to be made up somewhere—and I sure wouldn't want to be the one to pay for it.

Sgt. Ordnance : I can understand a soldier forgetting a lot of things. But I can't get into my head how anyone can be dumb enough to leave behind any ammunition. It's like rowing out into the ocean and throwing away your oars. It wouldn't be so bad except there are a lot of other guys in the same boat depending on those oars.

Notes On Driving

Pfc. Quartermaster : You've got to get used to driving on the right all over again. At first it's easy, because the novelty keeps your mind focused on the job, but once the novelty wears off, you tend to let your guard down. Then bang! It only takes one collision with a red truck (explosives) to finish the war—for you.

Motor Pool Officer : Americans are the best damned drivers in the world. We can put the big babies right where we want them. We don't put them in ditches—when we do it's on account of we're pooped out from driving too much and too hard.

But I wouldn't have a lorry driver working for me if I was a civilian. They gun it too hard—they ride roughshod over these bumpy roads and ride the hell out of their equipment.

Instead of walking the last 100 yards over torn up ground around a CP or battery, they'll move the truck right in to save themselves a walk—and it tears the machine to pieces.

We have the idea in the Army doesn't expect more than 10,000 miles out of a vehicle. Hell, in civilian life we'd take a car in after 10,000 miles for a good overhaul and send her out again good as new. But not these Army jalopies. We run them into the ground in no time, and then holler for a new one.

These cars all ought to be checked before running them after the waterproofing has been removed. In this pool I'm in, we deadline our cars every few days, otherwise they wouldn't get any care at all.

There are soft spots all over this French countryside—down at the beach and in muddy places where the traffic has churned—the concrete to bits. Too many drivers try to force their trucks through these spots with a two wheel drive. Put her into four wheel drive right away. Don't wait until you've stuck.

Another thing, be sure to put sandbags on the floors of all vehicles. One of our boys was tossed 30 feet the other day. He was driving a command car. He wanted to make a turn in the road and opened a gate to give him room to back up in. The road had been demined, but not the field beyond the gate. Well, he's walking, but they still haven't found all the pieces off the rear end of that car. First thing he said when he got back was "For your own sake, put sandbags all over the bottom." Seven bags will take care of a jeep—it takes nine to twelve sandbags for a command car.

Give your car the most 1st and 2nd echelon maintenance you can—don't forget the oil and grease—and use your gears so you don't strain her. That was true in training. It's even more important now.

One thing more. Look at this motor pool. All these trucks and jeeps you see are nicely camouflaged from the air, under apple trees with netting spread out over and around the cars. But look at the way some jerk laid out all those gasoline tins in the open. One sappy trick like that one dope goofed off all the good work done by everyone else.

Some Facts About Normandy

NORMANDY was one of the old provinces of the Kingdom of France. Now the country is divided into departments for administrative purposes.

The old province of Normandy includes the modern departments (something like our counties) of Manche and Calvados in which most of the fighting has taken place. The country was called Nor-man-dy after the North-men, who conquered it about 1,000 years ago. When you see a tall, blue-eyed blond, who doesn't fit your idea of what a Frenchman should look like, remember the old Vikings.

Most of the territory within our lines is less than 600 feet above sea level, but a little further south the Hills of Normandy rise to about 1,200 feet. The coast line varies from high cliffs, 400 feet high at Joburg on the west coast of the Cherbourg peninsula to the long beaches where we landed. The tides are tricky, in many places varying from 20 to 30 feet, so, if you go swimming, voluntarily or not, be careful.

Normandy is a farming province. The Norman farmer is regarded by other Frenchmen somewhat as the Scot is by the English or the New England Yankee by other Americans. He is not given to exuberance, but is likely to be a self-sufficient fellow, well satisfied with his fertile farm and good living.

The weather is usually mild and damp. Extreme cold or heat is unusual. The prevailing winds are southwest.

Some Handy French Phrases

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Food ? (eat) | Manger ? (mahn-JAY) |
| 2. Water ? (drink) | Boire ? (bwar) |
| 3. Show me ? | Montrez-moi (mawntray-MWA) |
| 4. Washroom ? | Lavabo (la-va-BO) |
| 5. Soldiers ? | Soldats (sawl-DA) |
| 6. Germans ? | Boches ? (Bawsh) |
| 7. Friend ? | Ami ? (ah-MEE) |
| 8. How many ? | Combien (kawm-B-Yan) |
| 9. Thank you | Merci (mayr-SEE) |
| 10. Where ? | Où ? (oo) |

Material for this issue was secured in the combat area in Normandy by a member of ARMY TALKS staff, and sent back by plane. It is written by the soldiers fighting in France.

How to prepare this Army Talk

HERE is an ARMY TALKS from the battlefield. Men in combat have contributed it and what they have to say is valuable to us all. Let's evaluate their statements and discuss them. There are differences of opinion expressed and no one has to accept any of the opinions as final. But no one will be inclined to pass by lessons learned the hard way. For those who are with them or who expect to join them soon every sentence is worth thinking about, and talking over with officers and non-coms. Remember, ARMY TALKS are for discussion.

NOTE TO ARMY GROUND FORCE UNIT LEADER :

This is your talk : from your men, for your men. No matter what your job there is something that can apply to it here. Ordnance can get new tips on battle care of the M1. A sergeant points out the need of keeping the ammo free from dirt ; a lieutenant carries a tooth brush to clean off his.

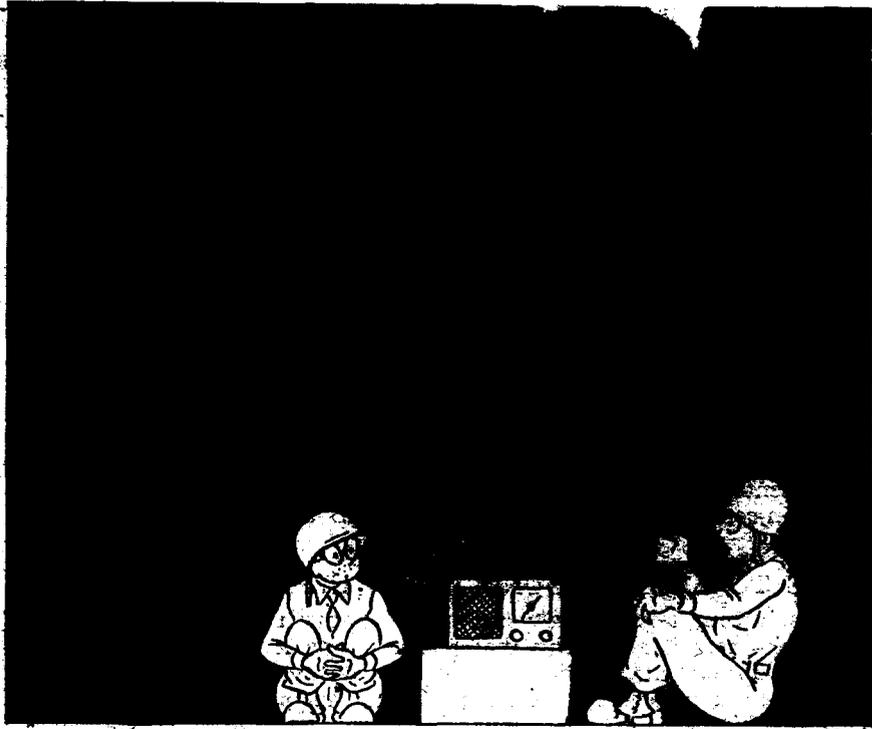
NOTE TO AIR FORCE UNIT LEADERS :

Without the unceasing cooperation of the Air Force—bombers and fighters—these men would not have made the progress in Normandy which they have. Never before has an amphibious operation been so thoroughly shielded by air power as were the landings in France. Never has air power been better able to prove its value as a coordinating link in the chain of attack. Cherbourg has been taken as much from the air as from the land. Today all land operations can be accelerated or slowed down depending on which side has air superiority.

NOTE TO SOS UNIT LEADERS :

From reading these comments from Normandy you might think men must be in action before they learn the value of equipment. The veteran learns to carry the necessities—he does not leave his helmet or his ammo behind. Nor does he start off with a lot of extra stuff which sooner or later he must junk. You already know it—but this bears it out—we are winning this war because we have "got thar fustest with the mostest." Supply has done the heroic and sometimes thankless job of getting the stuff up there—time or place or death have made no difference.

Lead off the discussion with the four best comments in the issue. Choose each one so that it applies to your unit. Ask two men to be ready with two questions each. At the close, allow five minutes to point up the discussion. The American Forces Network program goes on the air at 1430 hours on Saturday—note change in time.



TIME: Saturday, 8 July 1944
at 1430-1500 hours.

PLACE: Any convenient spot
where you have a radio
and a room for your
platoon to listen in
and discuss the subject.

STATION:
American Forces Network.