

LOOK OUT BELOW!

By REV. (Lt. Col.) FRANCIS L. SAMPSON

To bring you up to date—Father Sampson, chaplain of the 101st Division, U.S. Army paratrooper corps, chuted into Normandy on D-Day. After facing death and capture at Nazi gunpoint, he is rescued by U.S. forces, returns to England for a rest period before jumping into Holland.

Jump Into Holland

CHAPTER TEN

The old tent city outside Newbury looked pretty good to us, especially with the band out to give us a rousing welcome. The local citizens were more friendly than before. For with the invasion of Normandy, the establishment of a permanent beachhead, and the opening of the long-awaited second front, the tide of the war had changed.

The biggest hurdle to the destruction of the Nazi power had been leaped, Fortress Europa had been breached, and the destruction of Hitler's forces was now an ultimate certainty. Confidence began to show in the faces of the tired, war-weary British.

Yet, they knew full well that a great deal of blood was yet to be shed on both sides and that more sweat and tears would be required before the final victory. But these sacrifices would be readily accepted by the civilians and soldiers of every Allied nation as the price for peace with honor.

Since seven-day furloughs were being granted, the men headed back to their homes in London to tear the front tugged at my trousers and city apart. They were given a "Happy" Houlahan was some stiff competition by the old right. I swallowed hard and German V-1 bombs, commonly referred to as "buzz bombs," I could have bitten my tongue referred to as "buzz bombs."

German bombers had stopped when her lovable little face coming over, for, besides me, saddened and tears began to ing their airpower to bolster well up in her eyes. ing their own defense on two fronts. But then she perked right up they had unleashed a new long-again and said, "Oh, then he is range artillery weapon, the V-1, with Jesus." Everything was all in a desperate attempt to turn right. I picked her up and al-back the tide.

Hitler's cherished dream of two days of my furlough defeating England by bombing spent in London relaxing. I managed to get all the Catholics for Mass, but since time was so short, I had to give general absolution instead of hearing confessions. Everyone went to Holy Communion.

As before the jump in Normandy, I again shook hands with the men as they left the hangars to go to their respective planes; a large number of men knelt for a blessing. We took off at eleven a.m. Escorted by P-47s we flew over the Channel, over Brittany and northern France, over Belgium, which was beautiful from the air, and then into Holland. There was not nearly as much flak sent up at us as in Normandy.

At ten minutes of one we stood up and looked up. We jumped at one o'clock. Just after I left the door, I saw a large castle below with a wide moat encircling it.

My chute opened well, but I had scarcely got my bearings again when I saw that I was swinging onto the top of another man's chute. I called out "LOOK OUT BELOW!" and tried to slip in the opposite direction, but it was too late. I landed almost in the middle of his chute and sank as if in quicksand.

At a division review for Churchills, General Eisenhower covered the ceiling of the dimly lit room in Normandy, decorated room. Silk threads that those who had distinguished themselves in a special manner in the next room, and stated that he looked the planes, and dozens of little confidence in future operations. floated down, each with a "Well. In other words, our combat come home" sign on his chest had just begun. Everyone swaled loved hard on that one.

The children wanted to know what happened to this man and the regiment received several that man; each asked about the hundred replacements to take men she had played for, and the places of those lost, killed, wondered when their adopted wounded, or missing. The bat-brothers were coming up to see a station that had been stationed them. Many of the children had a Lambie in a museum. The time received answers from their moved over to the regimental soldiers who somehow or other; consequently more tents had found time in Normandy had to be put up, mess halls to write to their little "sisters," built, and so forth.

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Colonel Howard R. Johnson, commander of the 501st parachute infantry, gets an assist as he chutes up for Holland jump, Sept. 17, 1944.

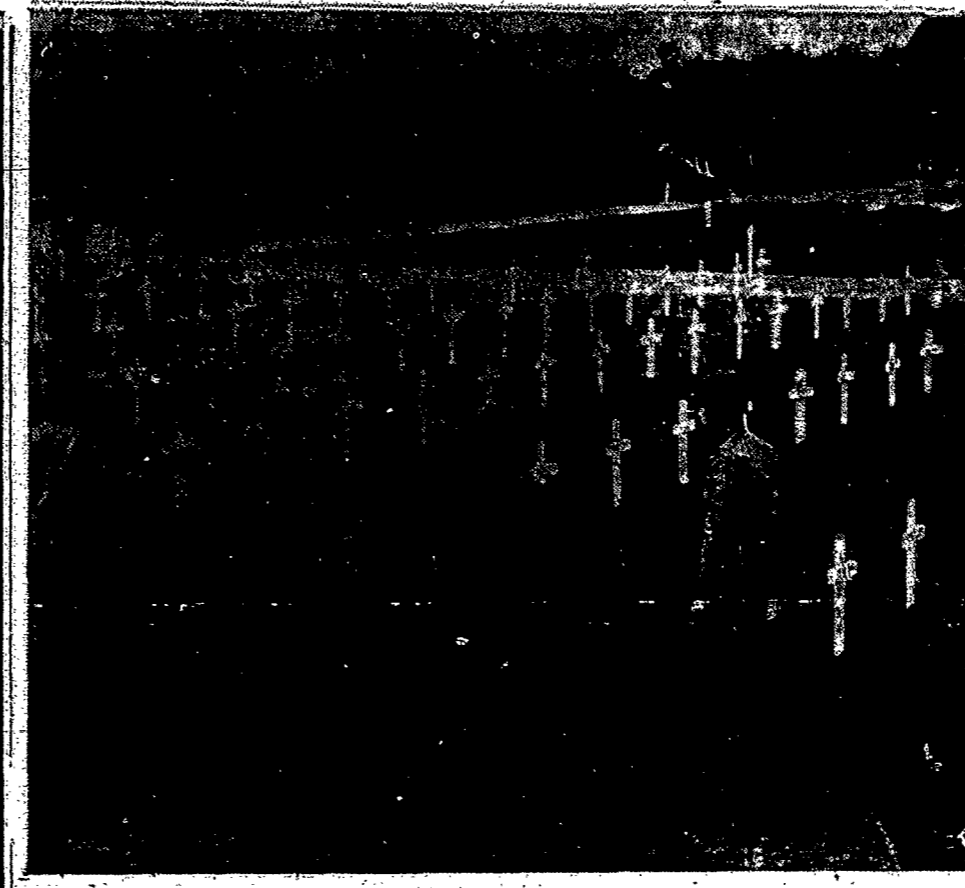
September 16 we were briefed for our mission in Holland. I managed to get all the Catholics for Mass, but since time was so short, I had to give general absolution instead of hearing confessions. Everyone went to Holy Communion.

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Men of the 101st airborne division killed in Holland were buried in this cemetery near Mijmegen in late October, 1944.

of these things in operation waiting to greet me. I had to shake everyone's hand. They all spoke English — all like real combat or if it was, I felt that I could take a lot more of the same kind. The two GIs came back. They had located Colonel Kinnard, and I went to tell him about Doc Kingston and to find out what our next move would be. He told me that we were near by eight miles from our scheduled drop zone and that the battalion would have to hurry to get there before nightfall and seize our objectives.

He told me to inform the Doc, then to procure some transportation from the civilians for the patients and aid men if possible, and to follow to Veghel. I hurried back to the castle, told Kinnard, and then went to procure some vehicles if I could.

The Germans had taken all the motor vehicles from the Dutch, but I was able to get two horse-drawn wagons and two Dutchmen to drive them. When we came within about three hundred yards of the castle, we saw Germans running all around the place. There were some things going on. Three dead Americans were lying alongside of the road, and there was no sign of Captain Byrd, the headquarters commandant, who had been left there to form a road block. The castle was obviously now in the hands of the Germans, for the aid men had no weapons. We were lucky not to have been seen by the enemy, or, if seen, not considered worth attacking.

My Dutch friends whipped the wagons around, and we lightailed it back to the village. I procured a scooter bike from one of the Dutch and set out for Veghel eight miles away to inform Colonel Kinnard.

First, however, I asked a couple of soldiers to locate Colonel Kinnard and come back and let me know where he was. Then I ate the fine dinner, was shaved, and went outside where a whole monastery of Norbertines was

The priest chaplain of the hospital was very gracious. He got out all his pre-war tobacco and the radio which he had hidden from the Germans for four years. The priest, who had been in the hospital to listen to the radio, I couldn't convince him that a real battle was still to be fought, since the first two days were comparatively quiet.

"By the way, Father," the Dutch priest said, "how many Masses do you say a day?" "One, when I can." It was a peculiar question for a priest to ask, since every priest is limited to one Mass per day except on Sundays or in an emergency. "Why do you ask?"

"You must save a great deal of wine at each Mass then," he replied, ignoring my question. "Oh, no, I use very little, as a matter of fact." I was still puzzled.

"Well," he went on, "about twelve of your soldiers have come over a time during the last two days asking for wine. I said that you sent them, that you needed it for Mass."

"But I didn't send anybody," I said. "I caught on."

"I only gave the first three messengers the wine. Told the others I was out of wine after that." He said, "We both had a good laugh. But I began to wonder how many priests throughout Normandy and Holland had probably England (too) had been prevailed upon to part with their wine on the same pretext."

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