

WITH THE 16th REGIMENT 1st DIVISION

The beach was covered with men, dead and wounded, together with "knocked out" tanks. We were told later that we lost over 2,000 men on this the first day of the Normandy Invasion on the Omaha Beachhead alone.

Earlier we had been told there would be about four German battalions in the fortified positions at Omaha Beach but we encountered eight who fought doggedly from their fixed positions on the top of the perpendicular cliff above us. Once having scaled the cliffs, we slowly gained ground, inch by inch and were able to keep it. Just a handful of courageous leaders and small groups of our men found our way around the German strong-points covering the beach exits as we forced a bloody path off of Omaha Beach.

We had been taught that the goal of every attack on every battlefield is to gain momentum; however, every instinct, especially among us young and inexperienced soldiers, is to take cover under fire. There was none. Instinct is reinforced when bodies of others who have failed to do so lie all around. It takes a considerable act of will to persuade your body to act and move forward.

On Omaha, the inexperienced 29th Infantry Division in facing combat for the first time, deprived in the first hours of landing of many of its officers and non-coms, and dismayed by its losses, became dangerously paralyzed. The veteran 1st Infantry Division, after fighting through Italy were on the left flank of the 29th Division and because of their combat experience, fought much better. After the war it was said that most Americans agreed that without "The Big Red One" (1st Division), the battle would have been lost.