

August 14, 1944

VICTORY BOUND

With Our Maine Boys

By JOHN M. O'CONNELL, Jr.

Managing Editor, Bangor Daily News

WITH THE 82d AIRBORNE DIVISION (Via Air Mail, U. S. Transport Command)—When the illustrious history of this division is written, Maine will have its share of heroes—officers and men who contributed much to one of the greatest tasks ever accomplished in battle—in its roll of honor. Among the list of heroes—many who made the supreme sacrifice—are officers and enlisted personnel who only a few years ago were next door neighbors to you and me. These men are paratroopers, members of the only organization that has made all three jumps in combat—Sicily, Italy and Normandy. Today, this organization that in the last war gave the famous Sergt. York to the Army, is geared for action and ready for further work and glory the like of which has already swept the 82d Airborne Division to the highest possible heights in military accomplishments.

PITTSFIELD MAN

AMONG Major General Mathew Ridgeaway's regimental commanders is a young officer from Pittsfield, Maine, who has been decorated for his actions in the Normandy attack, whose regiment has received the Presidential Citation and who is acknowledged in division circles to be a soldier and executive in every sense of the word. Never have I stepped into a more military camp than that which I was privileged to visit a few days ago when I asked to see Col. Roy E. Lindquist, of Pittsfield, commanding officer of one of the paratroop infantry regiments.

Before writing about Col. Lindquist's career and a little about his part in the recent Normandy operation I am going to piece together some information about him and his regiment that I gathered about the camp from officers and men who served under him and from official releases at Divisional Headquarters.

The paratroopers, of the 82nd Airborne Division had gone into Normandy hours before H-Hour on D-Day. Their mission has already been explained to you which in a nutshell was, in addition to gaining several objectives, keep the enemy from reaching our beachhead with powerful forces from the south and west. Col. Lindquist's paratroop infantry had this job assigned to it. The boys in their camouflaged 'chutes floated down far and wide on the Cotentin Peninsula and immediately sprung to take and hold every strong point within their reach.

In the actions that followed cooks and chauffeurs were sometimes found in important defensive positions and every man in the regiment knew from the start that the 508th was in for the toughest kind of an operation.

WON RIVER BANK

THE regiment with which Col. Lindquist made his 24th paratroop jump, landed in the vicinity of the Merderet river and with other units of the division forced the enemy west of the river at the very start.

One group of the regiment was isolated for four days across the river with only radio communication. Some units had landed considerable distance from their intended objective. After clearing the way down to Chef du Pont where terrific fighting ensued they crossed the river and assaulted one of the division's main objec-

tives. They captured over 100 prisoners and then managed to get the regiment together again pretty much as a unit.

The regiment then launched into the crossing of the Douve river and the attack on Beuzeville la Bastille. In this operation over 300 German prisoners were taken and a large number of German tanks.

TOUGH JOB

ASKED what he considered the toughest part of the operation Col. Lindquist said he considered the crossing of the Douve near Beuzeville la Bastille the biggest operation. It involved a territory five miles by three miles, he pointed, out and in one day the unit captured several hundred prisoners and cleared Bauppte.



LINQUIST

In an official release, however, Col. Lindquist is shown to be very modest about his part in this particular battle. Here is that version: Col. Roy E. Lindquist, the commanding officer, made a move which kept the enemy force on "Hill 95" down considerable below what it otherwise would have been. According to an artillery officer, Col. Lindquist often directed the artillery fire and in doing this operated on the theory that the Germans would do what he himself would do under similar circumstances.

The colonel saw an orchard which to him looked like good cover in case any troops were hiding in that vicinity.

Accordingly he ordered the orchard swept with fire. Later it was learned that a German force preparing for an assault on "Hill 95", then held by men of his regiment had been virtually wiped out by

the concentration on the orchard. This was later verified by prisoners captured by patrols.

The unit moved to Etenville village and over to St. Saveur where it remained for the remainder of the operation. One battalion moved down and captured Pretot while Col. Lindquist was at Etenville, securing that sector. Over 500 prisoners were captured by the regiment in the Normandy action.

EARLY IN THE PARATROOPERS

COL. LINDQUIST graduated from Maine Central Institute at Pittsfield in 1925 and from West Point Military Academy in 1930. He received his commission as a colonel in March 1943. He was the third officer in the U. S. Army to join the parachute corps and has been with the 82nd Airborne Division since its activation. The colonel was stationed at Portland Harbor for three years and went from there to Camp Benning, Georgia, where the paratrooper units were activated.

Col. Lindquist, whose wife and two children—Roy, Jr., 11, and Robert, 8—live in a new home recently purchased in Pittsfield—played football and baseball at M. C. I. and was captain of hockey at West Point in 1930. He has frequently officiated at hockey games in schools and colleges.

HAS RECEIVED CITATIONS

FOR "exemplary conduct and performance of duty in Normandy from June 6 to July 8" Col. Lindquist was awarded the combat infantry award by order of Commanding General Ridgeway. He has also received the Silver Star for gallantry in action and wears a Presidential Citation. This reads "for extraordinary

heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action in the initial assault on the northern coast of Normandy.”

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May 2, 1945

DAILY NEWS, BANGOR, VICTORY BOUND

By JOHN M. O'CONNELL, Jr.

Managing Editor, Bangor Daily News

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Read John M. O'Connell's column tomorrow in which he mentions men from the 508th Paratroop Division from the following Maine towns: Rumford, Eagle Lake, Frye, Fairfield, Waterville, Augusta, Brewer, Bucksport, Westbrook, So. Windham, Lincolnville, Dennysville and Pittsfield.

WITH THE 508th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT—SOMEWHERE IN THE ETO (Air Mail Via U. S.



Transport Command), April 24 (Delayed)—Parachutists of the famous 82nd Airborne Division—veterans of all the major campaigns in the European Theatre—were among the first combat troops this correspondent spent time with when first coming overseas nearly a year ago, I visited the 82nd Di-

vision again several months later during the unit's spectacular participation in the

Holland operation around the Nijmegen bridge sector. Casualties run high in Airborne units. There are very few hospitals that do not have an airborne soldier among their patients. Many of the officers and men whom I met on previous visits are no longer with their organizations. A great many have paid the supreme sacrifice. While waiting for that Allied announcement that Germany has been completely defeated—the V-E proclamation that will also be my signal to start packing for the return journey—I could think of nothing more pleasant than a few more days with parachutists.

MET COL. LINDQUIST

AS PREVIOUSLY mentioned I met Col. Roy E. Lindquist, of Pittsfield, Maine, recently and accepted his invitation to visit the 508th Parachutists. The colonel's regiment was with the 82nd Airborne Division when I last visited this organization. The 508th had only a few Maine men at that time. I didn't have an opportunity to spend much time with them then but was happy to find on my arrival today that there is a very representative Pine Tree State delegation in this famous regiment that has received many honors including the Presidential Citation.

In efficiency and military appearance the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment—in the opinion of this correspondent—doesn't have to take second place to any unit in the theatre. For hospitality it can't be topped. Its record of achievements speaks for itself and has been referred to at some length in the previous column. On this visit I spent some time with officers of each battalion and met the staffs of each and of headquarters. It's probably the farthest thing from the minds of those responsible for the messes in each unit that



May 2, 1945

PARACHUTISTS GETTING READY—Maybe some of the approximately 20 Maine men in the 508th Paratrooper Regiment commanded by Roy E. Lindquist, of Pittsfield, will want to take one of these packs back with them and get themselves dropped into some of the fishing and hunting territory of Northern Maine—inaccessible otherwise—and then again maybe they won't. A buddy is helping these two 508th Paratroopers get ready for a jump. Note the circular shaped new safety releasing device on the sergeant at the left.

they are competing in any way for superiority of one over the other. However, I had the pleasure of eating in all three battalion messes. Each seemed to get better as you began to feel the spirit of the Airborne troops again. Here, although in the field, they made me feel that you were being entertained deluxe style.

THE LAST WORD

The airborne soldier feels, of course, that a paratrooper is just about the last word in our armed forces. He's supposed to be just a little better than any other fighter. He'll tell you so, confidentially of course. To one who sees eye to eye with General Eisenhower's oft repeated statement that no one branch of the service is the best—that the hard fighting infantry foot slogger, the terrifically successful armored unit fighter and the proven heroes of the air corps, together with all other groups of our great fighting power, must be considered as just one big coordinated machine—it's difficult in the company of these elite soldiers to keep your feet on the ground with these known facts and not become airborne, at least for the moment.

For at least two weeks now there has been plenty of good sunshine over here and nearly every man in the 508th is as tanned as if he spent weeks on the beaches at one of our many ocean resorts. Daily physical training exercises—not the easy and brief periods we think of in regular gymnasium classes—held in the open fields with long stretches of vigorous setting ups and rugged procedure particularly adapted to airborne units certainly show their worth in this regiment. Never have I seen a better looking group of soldiers. They are rugged, healthy and ready for anything that comes along for their next assignment. In towns near where I visited

the regiment it was not difficult to pick out a paratrooper from the 508th. He really looked different.

INSPECTION TIME

Dropping in unexpectedly on third Battalion the morning I arrived at the 508th with Col. Lindquist we found the battalion commander in the process of a unit inspection. It was the first inspection of personnel and equipment that I have happened to hit upon over here and what I mean it was an inspection. Major Alton L. Bell, of Dennysville, is the executive officer of this battalion and the unit commander is Lt. Col. Louis G. Mendez, of Trinidad, Colorado. Col. Lindquist made a personal inspection of the squads in several of the tents and here I got my first proof of the efficiency of the organization. Col. Mendez arranged for several exhibits for us there. I was impressed by the increase in personal clothing, toilet articles and equipment, as compared to that carried in the last war, displayed on each soldier's sleeping cot.

After lunch—perhaps I should have done it before lunch, when I could have bent over a bit more easily—the boys gave me a demonstration of how they prepared to take to the air. By the time they have the new and very modern packs on, the parachute and other equipment they have over 60 pounds additional weight. Each man carries a completely assembled rifle. Formerly it was broken down into three pieces. In addition nearly every man in this outfit has equipped himself with a neat little German revolver, small enough to slip into his outside pocket, not provided for in the regular tables of organization. "It's the quickest thing to get your hands on when you first land," said one paratrooper, indicating that the second or more required to get the rifle into position after landing might make it too late.

After I had watched the boys, I was their guinea pig. I admitted that it was all I could do to lift all the equipment they had assembled together, to say nothing of jumping with it on my back. However, I bent over a bit. They strapped on the packs and then watched me try to straighten up. Yes, sir, it's quite a trick. "Sitting in a plane for three or four hours with that stuff strapped to you is no rocking chair job," said one of my GI hosts. I admitted he was correct, there was no argument.

In marked contrast to the time it takes to get yourself "all dressed up" for the takeoff is the speed with which you get out of the equipment. An improved unbuckling device recently added to the equipment is actually remarkable. A metal contraption about the size of a large watch, or perhaps a little larger, contains a pull chain that releases everything almost instantaneous. This is locked until the soldier turns the round disk about a half turn, a foolproof safety device during the descent.

The "dress me up to die suits" is what the boys call their fancy equipment. This is typical of the way the airborne boys talk of their hazardous job in the Army. "Feed 'em before the kill" is the kind of answer you get if you pass a remark about the excellent meals served in the regiment. These paratroopers are not only great soldiers. They also have a great [clipping ended]



MAINE AIRBORNE FIGHTERS—Col Roy E. Lin[d]quist, of Pittsfield, Maine, whose 508th Parachute Regiment has made an outstanding record in this new and tough branch of the service, has 20 Pine Tree Staters today in this unit. In addition to the Presidential Citation Ribbon most of the veterans in this unit wear plenty of decorations— including many Purple Hearts. The bundles the boys in the back row are standing on contain heavy weapons, ammunition, equipment and material ready to be dropped to them as they hit the ground. In this picture (left to right): Capt. Jonathan E. Adams, of Bangor; John M. O'Connell, Jr., NEWS correspondent; Col. Linquist; Major Alton Leroy Bell, of Dennysville; 1st Lieut. Lionel O. Frigo, of Rumford; 1st Sergt. Lionel W. Gagnon of Eagle Lake; (second row): Pfc. Harold J. Athearn of Lincolnville; Cpl. Frederick W. Robbins of Frye; Pvt. Edward T. Stewart of Brewer; Pvt. Ernest Olsen of Bucksport; Sergt Maurice A. Parker of Fairfield: Pvt. Edward L. Tottle, South Windham; T|5 Wendell E. Morrison, Augusta; Cpl. Fernand J. Bouthot, Waterville; and Pfc. Jesse T. Snyder, Westbrook.

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WITH THE 508th PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT—SOMEWHERE IN THE ETO (Air Mail Via U. S. Army Trans-

port Command), April 25 (Delayed)—Twenty men, representing 19 different communities in the State of Maine, are today part of the well known 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, commanded by Col. Roy E. Lindquist, of Pittsfield. Other Maine officers in the regiment are: Major Alton L. Bell, of Dennysville; Capt. Johnathan E. Adams, of Bangor; and Lieut. Lionel O. Frigo, of Rumford.

The enlisted personnel of the regiment today includes:

Sergt. Joseph L. G. Tancrel and Pfc. Kenneth E. Blackmore, of Auburn. (Auburn is the only community with more than one man in the unit.) ,

T/5 Wendell Eugene Morrison, of Augusta.

Pvt. Lionel Brillent, of Brunswick.
1st Sergt. Lionel W. Gagnon, of Eagle Lake.
Sergt. Maurice A. Parker, of Fairfield.
Cpl. Frederick W. Robbins, of Frye.
Pfc. Harold John Athearn, of Lincolnville.
Pfc. Joseph N. Farrell, of Lewiston.

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