

Rangers in Battle

It was their first real raid, and when it was over they knew they were tough. So did the Ities.

By S/Sgt. Ralph G. Martin
YANK Staff Correspondent

WITH THE RANGERS ON THE TUNISIAN FRONT—The moon went down at 03.15 that night, and half an hour later the Axis outpost was a shambles, thick with the dead bodies of some newly imported Italian crack troops. The night-raiding Rangers had completed their first mission on the Tunisian front, quickly and completely.

The night before they had piled into fast-moving trucks and had ridden under cover of darkness several hours. None of them knew where they were going. Then they piled out of the trucks, lugging their full equipment, and marched on the double for eight miles across the rugged North African countryside. That night, they bivouacked several miles from their objectives. Between them and the cold night they had nothing but their shelter halves.

The next day, hiding against detection in the sun, they made a careful reconnaissance. They found the enemy, and during the afternoon they drew their plans for the night assault.

It was tense, waiting there, knowing that in just a few hours they would strike. The axis outpost was heavily fortified.

They sat around smoking and playing cards, but even then the atmosphere was tense until everybody had a good laugh over the three Arabs who came up to the front lines trying to sell oranges and eggs. Nobody was taking any chances, and after the boys finished laughing they were dead serious and put the Arabs under guard until after the attack.

At sundown that night, they gave a final check to their equipment, and waited.

At the zero hour, they moved into action. The element of surprise was their greatest strategic advantage. They moved stealthily through the night, wearing shoes with special treads. They had thrown aside their helmets, because anything striking a helmet will make a noise, and silence was their main weapon.

The Italians were caught with their pants down. Most of them were in bed or en route to bed. At the first outbreak of action, Axis officers in the rear hopped on motor bikes and scrambled, leaving their men to figure out their own angles.

Most of the enemy fireworks came from .37 mm. cannon which were dropping shells blindly around the troops, but more accurately around the CP.

The cannon were near the main objective of Captain Murray's company. The colonel in the CP got

Captain Murray on the field radio and asked:

"Captain, when are you going to reach your objective?"

The captain answered tersely, "The objective has been reached, sir."

"Well," the colonel said, "when are you going to knock out those god-damned .37 mms. ?"

Just then, two of Murray's boys parked a few grenades onto the Italian .37 mm. rifles, and there weren't any more .37 mm. rifles.

"The .37 mms. reached and destroyed, sir," the captain reported.

Home Run

And that's the way the show worked, cool, calm and collected. But it wasn't *all* cool. One ranger threw a grenade into a foxhole, and an Italian threw it right back. The ranger caught it once more, and threw it right back again. This time it was a strike, and the game was over. The concussion of the grenade landed just one foot away from Pfc. Imre Biro. It picked him up and laid him down again three feet away. It made the former New York City "dead end" kid so mad he got up, shook off the shock, grabbed a tommy gun and waded in after the Itie who threw the grenade.

Colonel Darby, the C.O., called Captain Max Schneider, another of his company commanders, and asked the captain if he had any more prisoners.

"I think I have two, sir," the captain said.

The field connection was bad, the colonel asked him to repeat the question. Meanwhile, the two Italians tried to pull a fast sneak, and Captain Schneider, a sharpshooter from Shenandoah, Iowa, fired two shots and answered the colonel, "Well, sir, I *had* two prisoners."

The luckiest of all the lucky to be taken prisoner (each received a pack of Chesterfields) was an Italian sergeant with a bump on his head. A grenade had hit him and bounced off his noggin, exploding elsewhere.

The Rangers really messed up the outpost when six mortar crew went into action.

Cpl. Richard Bevin of Esterville, Iowa, went up ahead to determine positions and radioed back the information, and added:

"And throw in the kitchen sink."

The kitchen sink was thrown in.

Most of the boys were having fun, but the Ranger who was having the time of his life was T/5 Stanley Bush. Bush got the purple heart for his action in the Dieppe raid last summer. Cpl. Franklin Koons, the first yank to get the British military medal in this war, also was along.

This was one show in which the big boys didn't sweat out the action at a headquarters in the rear echelon. Not only Lieut.-Col. William M. O. Darby, but his executive officer, Major Herman Dammer,

New York City, and his chief medical officer, Captain William Jarrett, New York City—all were there right in the front lines, working and fighting as hard as any of their men.

Captain Jarrett and his crew of assistants are unique. They are, so far as we know, the only fighting physicians in the United States Army. They have gone through complete Ranger training, and when they are not using a pistol or an M-1, they are tying bandages. They don't wear the Red Cross armband, and they don't want any special consideration from the enemy. Nor do they give any.

Flying Doctors

The four medical officers on the raid treated two officers and 18 enlisted men. One of the Rangers was beyond treatment. All the rest of the 18 wounded—guys still partially shellshocked or temporarily blinded by the concussion of grenades—all insisted on walking back the nine miles to base.

It was the first all-Ranger raid in history. At Dieppe, a small, select group worked together with British commandos and wiped out four German coastal guns.

They worked again in cooperation with the troops in the initial African landings last November, but this was the first time they had been out on their own.

They don't chew nails or spit rust, these Rangers, but the day after this latest raid one Ranger said, "Now we know we are tough."

How They Got That Way

And they are. They went through the famous British commando course, and broke every record. (Commandos and Rangers have the greatest mutual respect.) When they first were activated as a unit last June, they were 10 per cent overstrength, so they went on a 38-mile hike without food or water, and when they returned they were 10 per cent understrength.

Since they arrived in North Africa their force has been supplemented by 100 enlisted men and six officers who came directly from the States. This Ranger unit represents the sum total of all Rangers who have completed their training, although more units are now in the making somewhere in the British Isles.

The Rangers are from all over the States. The youngest is an 18-year-old, Pfc. Lemuel Harris from Pocohontas [sic], Va. The oldest is 35-year-old J. B. Coomer of Amarillo, Tex. J. B. averages a thousand bucks every month at cards, and sends it all home to his wife. For two months at a stretch, a while back, he didn't gamble. The next month he sent home \$3,000.

"My wife," he said, "appreciates a little extra money every now and then."

Lion Tamers and Indians

Both Harris and Coomer were on the raid, along with a full-blooded Sioux Indian, T/5 Samuel P. One-Skunk from Cherry Creek, South Dakota. Another Ranger is a former lion tamer who worked with Frank Buck—Cpl. James Haines, Lexington, Ky. Also on the raid were two brothers, both former golden gloves boxing champions, Pvt. Othel and Sgt. Dick Greene of Des Moines, Iowa.

The Rangers also have their own photographers who shoot nothing but cameras. Among them is Sgt. Phil Stern, former photographer for *Life*, *Look*, and *P.M.* and T/5 Henry Paluch, a movie photographer.

In the Rangers are wrestlers and bullfighters, clerks and poets, and any one of them can break you quietly in two. The quickest way to bring down their wrath on your head is to walk up to one of them and yell, "Heigh Ho, Silver." The reaction is immediate and unpleasant.

Tough as they are, they did get a great kick out of a letter from the President of the Boy Rangers of America. It read:

"I am very anxious to make the acquaintance of our big-brother Rangers overseas. Upon receipt of this letter, please write and tell us of your experiences in France and in North Africa, and we will assign one of your little Ranger brothers to tell you of our doings."

The letter was signed, "Yours for victory, Trusty Tommy."



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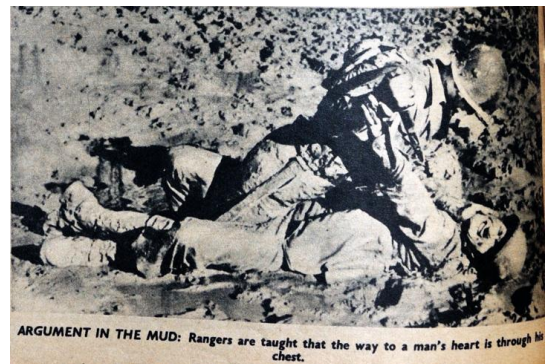
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CPL BRAND



THE ACTUALITY: Tense-faced and fighting mad, Rangers hold a captured French gun at an Algerian port.



ARGUMENT IN THE MUD: Rangers are taught that the way to a man's heart is through his chest.