**D-Day eyewitness accounts – Omaha Beach**

**Private Harold Baumgarten - 29th Infantry Division - 116th Infantry Regiment - B Company - Omaha Beach**

As we approached the beach, the bullets started hitting our LCA. The Company B boat on our left was hit by a shell and blew up. The splintered wood, metal, and body parts were raining down on us from about fifteen feet above. Our young British sailor wanted to drop the front ramp in the twenty-foot-deep water and motor away. Lieutenant Donaldson pulled out his Army Colt 45, pointed it at the frightened seaman, and bellowed, 'Take us all the way in." The sailor's fear was well founded. He saw the boat explode on our left, heard all the explosions and gunfire around us and saw the teller mines attached to the wooden pilings in front of us. Finally, the boat stopped, and the front ramp went down in neck deep water.

German MG 42s were trained on our ramp opening, as I stepped forward to leave the craft. The water was bright red, from the blood of some of those who had been in front of me. Lieutenant Donaldson was killed immediately, Clarius Riggs was machine gunned on the ramp, and then fell headfirst into the bloody water.

I jumped into the neck-deep water (for my height) with my rifle above my head. On leaving the ramp a bullet creased the top of my helmet. About 300 yards straight ahead was a 20-25 foot high cobble (shale) stone seawall. There was barbed wire on its top. Looming above this wall was a bluff that rose up another 75 feet, and had enemy positions (trenches) hidden in it. There was about 200 yards of dry sand leading before it with "ramps" and "hedgehogs," which were all mined. The ramps were logs at 45-degree angles facing the water. The hedgehogs were composed of three beams welded together and cemented in the sand. These obstacles plus the two I had already passed in the water, the Belgium Gate and angled stakes, were all placed to destroy the assault boats at high tide. The Belgium gates were made of metal, 10-feet-wide and 7feet-high, and cemented down.

Some of the fellows, who were able to exit the boat without getting machine gunned, were being dragged under by the wet combat jackets and heavy equipment. Their life preservers were of no value. The water was over the head of the average man in my boat. German snipers were also picking them off. The water was being splattered up by bullets, as I ran through it. It was surreal.

About 200 yards from the wall, we were now running in ankle deep water. Robert Dittmar was ten feet in front of me to the right, and another of my boat team was behind me on my left. A burst of machine gun bullets came from above the wall and slightly to our right. I heard a thud from Dittmar's direction. Then instantaneously my rifle, which was carried at port arms across my chest, was hit and vibrated in my hands. My rifle had a clean hole in its receiver, in front of the trigger guard. The seven bullets in the receiver had stopped the German bullet from penetrating the rifle to hit my chest. I had heard another thud behind me at the same instant, and my other boat team member had been gunned down.

**Seaman 1st Cl Robert Watson - 5th Engineer Special Brigade - 6th Naval Beach Battalion - Omaha Beach**

Our landing craft was the first to head to Fox Green Beach and we were immediately fired upon about 200 yards from the beach. Our craft hit a mine that blew the front of the boat clear out of the water at the same time we were hit with 88mm shells from the beach. It was then that I found myself in the water over my head with a full pack on my back. Somehow I made it to the beach behind a Hedgehog which gave me some cover. There were bodies, body parts and blood everywhere. I proceeded up the beach on my knees and elbows where I came across an Army medic and helped him with the wounded. The enemy was firing at us with machine guns, mortars and 88mm cannon from all directions. There were more killed and wounded on the beach than those of us left alive. I finally made to the dune line in fair shape and this offered us a bit of protection. An Army captain then ordered me to the top of the dune line to fire my rifle at the enemy.

**Private First Class Earl Chellis, Jr - 1st Infantry Division - 16th Infantry Regiment - E Company - Omaha Beach**

He said he was going to lower the ramp. As he did machine gun fire was hitting us. Shells were exploding all around. Some of the men in front got hit. I jumped off the landing craft and into the water. It was over my head. When I hit the bottom I would have to kick up and down. Getting air and doing it again. I was being pushed into the beach from the tides and waves. Finally, I could get a footing and walk out of the water. I then fell onto the beach to catch my breath. I got up and ran to the shore. You could see the bullets hitting the sand all around you.

The land was about twelve inches higher than the beach. So you could keep your head down. Every time you fired your gun, machine guns would fire back at you. Men were still coming in. It was getting very crowded on the beach. Bodies of the dead and wounded kept washing up on the shore. They were coming in and out on the tide. The water turned red from all the blood. The medics were trying to get the wounded out of the water and on to dry land. I don’t know how long I stayed there.

Someone said move to the right. We got up and ran to where there was a line of men going up a hill and off the beach.

I got in the line up the hill and was told to step in the foot prints of the man in front of me because there were land mines all around us. When I got to the top of the hill I looked down at the beach, shells were exploding and ships were burning. Men and equipment were still coming in.

On the hill top men were scattered all over the place. Men were looking for their own companies and divisions.

As I was waiting for the next move I was knocked over and hit the ground. I landed on my back, I heard someone say call a medic.

I had been hit by a piece of shrapnel on my left shoulder. It hit my trench knife making a hole in my shoulder. The medic patched me up and told me to go back down to the beach and I would get back to England. I looked at him and said. I just got off that beach and I was not going to go back down there. I got up and moved forward. I spent the night behind a hedgerow.