

FIRST DRAFT

*In France
15 June 47*

TO THE CITIZENS OF CARENTAN:

Two years ago today a great battle was raging about the City of Carentan. Following the airborne and amphibious landings of the Allied Forces to the north, this town became the principal objective of the landing operation. It was important as a center of communication, lying along the boundary of the American Seventh Corps which landed near Poupeville and the Fifth Corps which had landed far to the east. It fell to the lot of my 101st Airborne Division to occupy this town, secure the south flank of the Seventh Corps and contact the Fifth Corps to the east.

You who know this place so well are aware of the tactical difficulties in liberating the city. Surrounded by a network of water-ways from any direction, the attack became a series of stream crossings. While we were still in England, however, we had decided upon the general plan of attack. In general terms, the plan consisted of a holding attack directly from the direction of St. Come, while the river crossings of the Douve, east of Carentan, became the principal effort. We realized that the town itself did not have the tactical importance of the high ground to the west which we were anxious to secure as a defensive base.

The citizens of this town know the history of the success of these maneuvers. The attack from the north, after bloody fighting near the bridges, gained a foothold in the hills west of the town, while the turning movement from the east was completely successful. By the evening of ___ June a decoration ceremony took place in the city square. This was attended by hundreds of the brave citizens who

within easy range of the German guns testified to the solidarity of their sentiments with those of the American Forces. A few days later, a second decoration ceremony was held, and you will recall with sadness the German bombardment which killed several of your citizens and wounded many others.

To those of us of the 101st Airborne Division, the fortitude and bravery of the French inhabitants of Carentan and vicinity will never be forgotten. These brave people endured patiently the destruction wrought by the chance of war and collaborated with the troops who had come to liberate them. To the men of my Division, ^{it} will be be one of their proudest boasts that in descending from the skies upon the fields of Normandy, they were permitted to play a major part in the liberation of Carentan and the final defeat of the Nazi invaders.