Ryan wanted to describe the war experience of common people, the veterans and civilians of all...

This notice in a military bulletin...

...results in this response.
Ryan wanted to describe the war experience of common people, the veterans and civilians of all nationalities involved. He advertises in newspapers and newsletters, attends reunions, conducts phone interviews, and mails out questionnaires. Ryan travels extensively in Europe to see the venues of the battles and talk to people still living in the areas. Starting with *The Longest Day* and continuing with two other battle books, Ryan makes an arrangement with *Reader '5 Digest* to use staffers in the *Digest's* European offices to help conduct research.
WANTED — VETERANS OF D-DAY INVASION ON NORMANDY BEACHHEADS:

Several times in the past few years The American Legion Magazine has been asked to help locate vets who served in particular engagements or theaters of operations.

Latest request comes from author Cornelius Ryan who is writing a history of D-Day in Normandy. He would like to interview veterans who participated in the invasion, June 6, 1944, and who can give firsthand accounts of the events that took place on that day.

History will appear in Reader’s Digest and will be published in book form. If you were there, contact Miss Frances Ward, Reader’s Digest, 230 Park Ave., New York, N.Y.
THOUSANDS OF MEN, ON LAND AND SEA AND IN THE AIR, PARTICIPATED IN THE INVASION OF NORMANDY BETWEEN MIDNIGHT JUNE 5, 1944 AND MIDNIGHT JUNE 6, 1944. IF YOU WERE ONE OF THEM, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

What is your full name? MALCOLM DODGE BRANNEN

What was your unit and division?
3d battalion Headquarters Company, 508th Parachute Regiment, 82d Airborne Division.

Where did you arrive in Normandy, and at what time?
In the vicinity of Piauville, Normandy 0100 hrs 6 June 1944.

What was your rank on June 6, 1944?
First Lieutenant

What was your age on June 6, 1944?
33 8/12

Were you married at that time?
No

What is your wife’s name?
Not applicable

Did you have any children at that time?
Not applicable

What do you do now?
PMST Stetson University ROTC, (Instructor Group Senior ROTC) DeLand, Florida

When did you know that you were going to be part of the invasion?
Date unknown but it was indicated during training in the States in late 1943 and more definitely early in 1944. Definitely known in April or May 1944.

What was the trip like during the crossing of the Channel? Do you remember, for example, any conversations you had or how you passed the time?
Quiet, dark and cool. Conversations were about things that were to be done after assembly or things that had been left undone prior to take off. We kidded each other about the load that we were carrying. No lights, not even a cigarette and was authorized to be showing. The last 10-15 minutes of the trip was rough, from the air disturbance caused by the many propellers and by the pilots trying to avoid flak. The plane tossed and bucked like a small boat on a turbulent sea—It was too a sea of turbulent air. It seemed as if our arms would be pulled from our shoulder socket and we stood up and hooked up and checked equipment. We held onto the cable line with two hands or with one hand and were being tossed and crowded like a jam in the subway after a ballgame in New York. We tried to sleep before we stood up and some of us relaxed so we felt drowsy after days of hurrying and preparing for the big moment.

What were the rumors on board the boat, ship or plane in which you made the crossing? (Some people remember scuttlebutt to the effect that the Germans had poured gasoline on the water and planned to set it afire when the troops came in). Since we were paratroopers we could expect to receive no mercy from the Germans should we be taken prisoner. The Germans were said to hate paratroopers and would put up with other soldiers but not with paratroopers. We were not, so we were told, to take souvenirs, not even the Luger Pistols if the opportunity presented itself because a paratrooper found with a German item was doomed.
I was not in pain. My right foot, after we heard a loud explosion, was almost immediately covered with blood and my Battalion Executive Officer, Major Alton Bell yelled at me saying, "Brannen, your foot is cut off." I said, "No it isn't, it's my left leg." Major Bell was convinced I was worse off than he anticipated, but to show him I was mentally OK, and nearly physically OK also, I raised my left hand where I had been applying pressure on my leg just above the wound. When I did this, the blood spurted out and started soaking my right foot and leg again. He then realized that I had been wounded in the left thigh and immediately called our Battalion surgeon, Lt. Brian Beaudin, who patched me up and got some of my company men, actually our cooks who were also Bazooka men, to help me to a first aid area just to the east of our position. My leg stiffened and I could hardly walk alone, and my shoes were caked with blood and dirt, my trousers were torn and in shreds but I was alive. The fragment that hit me came from a bursting shell that killed our artillery forward observer and three of his enlisted assistants - just a mere yard or two from my position on the ground, in a ditch in a Normandy Apple Orchard on 3 July 1944 so far from home.
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY MILITARY DISTRICT, FLORIDA
2137 Liberty Street, P. O. Box 3141
Jacksonville, Florida

DAILY BULLETIN
NUMBER 67

OFFICIAL

EFFECTIVE UNTIL 4 MAY 1958 UNLESS SOONER RESCINDED OR SUPERSEDED

1. STAFF DUTY OFFICER, DUTY NCO, AND CHARGE OF QUARTERS: (After Duty Hours Telephone Number ELgin 6-7351 (Official Use); ELgin 5-4563-4 or ELgin 6-4725 (Unofficial Use)

4 - 5 Apr --- Capt Lisenby MSgt Roddenberry PFC Dickerson

DB #67 HQ, USA MIL DIST, FLA

UNOFFICIAL

HISTORY OF D-DAY: A history of D-Day (6 June 1944) is being prepared by Cornelius Ryan for publication in Reader's Digest and in book form to coincide with 15th anniversary of event in 1959. U. S. Army personnel who participated in the operation during 24 hours starting midnight 5 June 1955, particularly those of the 1st, 4th, 90th, 29th Infantry Divisions, 82d and 101st ABN Divisions, 2d and 5th Ranger Bns, plus attached elements, are asked to write to Miss Frances Ward, Reader's Digest, 230 Park Avenue, New York, New York. Prospective personal interviews of selected individuals will be based upon letter received.

(FMPO)
Miss Frances Ward  
Reader's Digest  
230 Park Avenue  
New York, New York  

Dear Miss Ward:  

"A grand day for an airborne invasion to be postponed for 24 hours, yes, 4 June 1944 was just that." So starts a written personal account of my experiences on D-Day 1944, mentioned later in this letter.  

However, in response to a notice in Daily Bulletin No. 67, Headquarters United States Army Military District, Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, dated 4 April 1958 I hereby submit my name for consideration in your personal interview program for the History of D-Day to be prepared by Cornelius Ryan for publication in Reader's Digest in book form, that will coincide with the 15th anniversary of the event in 1959.  

I was a first lieutenant in command of 3rd Battalion Headquarters Company, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, attached to the 82nd Airborne Division during the period in which you are interested.  

The reason I feel that you might be interested in my experiences during the first few hours of D-Day, and the next few days may be seen in news releases by Clark Lee, Staff Correspondent for International News Service during the period of 17-21 June 1944, concerning the disrupting of German Defenses on the Cherbourg Peninsula on D-Day, 6 June 1944. At least three papers which carried the account are, The Manchester, New Hampshire "Union", a Springfield, Massachusetts paper, and a paper from San Francisco, California. I have clippings from these three papers. A clue to the name of the San Francisco paper is that the story was on page 2, and the front page had Nr 171 and America First, on the banner.  

Another reference to the incident mentioned is told by James M. Gavin, recently retired Commanding General of the Wartime 82d Airborne
Division, in his book, "Airborne Warfare" published in Washington, D. C. by The Infantry Journal Press in 1947. The last sentence on page 55 says, "He was killed and his driver captured a few minutes later by a lieutenant of the 508th Parachute Infantry". I was that lieutenant.

I also have in my possession a letter written to me by then Major General Gavin, 31 May 1947, concerning the affair and concurring in the action I took that day.

On page 26, History of the 508th Parachute Infantry, The Odyssey of the 508th Parachute Infantry, by William G. Lord, II, published in Washington, D. C. by The Infantry Journal Press, there is also an account of my first few days' experiences in Normandy, starting about 2200 hours, 5 June 1944.

In addition, I have a short personal account of my first few days' action in Normandy from 5 to 9 June 1944. I wrote this account while I was in a hospital in England, recovering from wounds received on 4 July 1944 in Normandy. This personal account has never been published, either complete or in part, except for information written by Clark Lee, mentioned above.

I am still in the U. S. Army, presently assigned as Professor of Military Science and Tactics of the Stetson University Reserve Officers'—Training Corps, DeLand, Florida.

I am very much interested in your project and if I can be of assistance to you I will be very happy to do so, that is, as far as possible within limits as authorized by proper U. S. Army officials.

It will be a pleasure to hear favorably from you in the future.

Sincerely,

Malcolm D. Brannen
Major, Infantry
0292262

1 Incl:
Daily Bulletin Nr 67,
Heo U.S. Army Military
District, Fla.

[Signature]

[Signature]
Release to PG

Shot: February

Box 7, #43

07/00
CAPTAIN MALCOLM D. BRANNON HQ Battalion 508 (Story told to DK by Neal Beaver)
at the 82 AB Convention

Brannon was one of the oldest jumpers in Normandy. He landed in a Drop Zone near the German Headquarters and took cover in a ditch. While he was lying there, a volkswagen came down the road by the ditch. Brannon shot the driver through the head and the volkswagen rolled over into the ditch. General Falley (check spelling) stumbled out of the car and fell on his hands and knees, and stared at Brannon. A luger had fallen out of the car as he drove and was lying in front of the General. The general went for the gun and Brannon shot him through the head.

From then on according to Beaver Brannon, who is a roly-polly non-military looking guy was chased all over Normandy. At one point, he remembered lying in the ditch under an artillery barrage all by himself and feeling an overpowering desire just to give up. He heard men working up through the hedgerows and was about to call it quits, he heard this mountain boy saying "them over there is theirs and them over here is ours".
Did you by any chance keep a diary of what happened to you that day? It was against the rules to keep a diary so I did not, however if I had known that so many high ranking officers were going to I would probably have done so also. I had kept a diary for years and this would have been something special to write, not just, "And so to bed!" Were any of your friends killed or wounded either during the landing or during the day? Yes, many were wounded, killed and captured.

Do you remember any conversations you had with them before they became casualties? Some of them were concerned with accomplishing their job once we were assembled. Some talked about their home and family and what they wish that they had done prior to taking off at one time or another. Some took some talks about what they were going to do when they returned to the States.

Were you wounded? Yes

Do you remember what it was like—that is, do you remember whether you felt any pain or were you so surprised that you felt nothing? I went hide-away, stared at us, twisting their heads, spreading their feet, sure to bring Germans if they kept up their tactics - soon they went their way - later came back and soon headed for "home". It scared me then but many times since then I have chuckled to myself as something reminds me of my predicament that weird night.

Do you recall any incident, sad or heroic, or simply memorable, which struck you more than anything else? Many, many—when our adjutant Lt. Paul Lehman who was reported dead came back to us when we liberated an enemy hospital was later seriously injured and was being carried to safety by our Battalion Commander when he was hit again several times by enemy fire and died shortly thereafter.

Our assistant supply officer, Lt. McAtearney, broke his jaw in two or more places on the jump, yet, took over for our supply officer, Lt. Shankey, and though he couldn't eat, carried on for nearly two weeks with an almost unbearable personal situation.
In times of great crisis, people generally show either great ingenuity or self-reliance; others do incredibly stupid things. Do you remember any examples of either? Upon entering a village, one of our officers fired his submachine gun at everything that moved. He came to a small shed, told his enlisted assistant to open the door quickly and he would "fire a burst" into the room. The men opened the door, jumped back, and the officer aimed at the room only to find that he was out of ammunition. Had the room been full of the enemy, it would have been the same — really a stupid act and blunder.

When our attack began to bog down one day, our Battalion Commander, Louis G. Mendez, Jr., got in front of the troops and led them forward. One Company Commander, Captain Hillman G. Dress, did the same thing and both acts were truly heroic and inspiring.

Where were you at midnight on June 6, 1944? In the corner of a field just north of Etienneville, Normandy under the very muzzles of German artillery pieces, watching Germans evacuate from the city which was being turned into rubble by our artillery and Air Force bombing.

Do you know of anybody else who landed within those 24 hours (midnight June 5 to midnight June 6) as infantry, glider or airborne troops, or who took part in the air and sea operations, whom we should write to?

Lt. Col. Louis L. Toth
Fort Holabird, Maryland

Col. Royal R. Taylor
82nd Airborne Division
Fort Bragg, N. C.

PLEASE LET US HAVE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT WE CAN INCLUDE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE BOOK. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE YOUR STORY ON SEPARATE SHEETS IF WE HAVE NOT LEFT SUFFICIENT ROOM. FULL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WILL BE GIVEN IN A CHAPTER CALLED "WHERE THEY ARE NOW; YOUR NAME AND VOCATION OR OCCUPATION WILL BE LISTED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Cornelius Ryan

Frances Ward
Research, The Reader's Digest