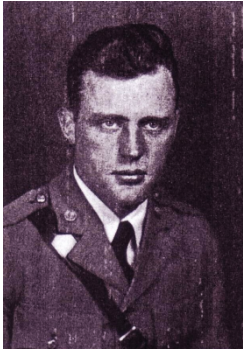


Murphy battled across Omaha Beach on D-Day.



Tom Murphy had to be one of the older second lieutenants heading toward Omaha Beach on that cold, windy late spring morning seventy years ago. A 1933 graduate of Clemson College, Murphy had earned an Army Reserve commission, a commission he probably never expected to exercise.

Thomas Francis Murphy was a native of Charleston and a graduate of Charleston High School. He attended Clemson during a period of profound transition, transition which would alter the course not only of American history, but of the history of the world. Murphy entered Clemson College in 1929. On March 4 of that year, Herbert Hoover was sworn in as president, succeeding Calvin Coolidge who had presided over the later years of the 'Roaring Twenties.' Within months, the stock market crashed and the black veil of the Great Depression descended on America and the rest of the world.

The transition from Charleston school boy to Clemson cadet was no doubt challenging enough without reference to the collapsing economy. Tom, a textile industrial education major, served as a private, corporal, sergeant and senior private during his four years as a cadet. Murphy attended classes in the Main Building and marched with the Corps across Bowman Field, transforming from youth to young man. At the same time, the world was transforming into a more dangerous place. By the time of his graduation and commissioning the following spring, economic hardship had replaced the relative prosperity of the Twenties. Adolf Hitler had become the German chancellor and the destabilization of Western Europe had begun.

As the Depression deepened its hold on the country and the south, Murphy must have felt fortunate to secure a position with the United States Rubber Company in Winnsboro. By the time he was called to active service in April 1943, he was directing the laboratories at Winnsboro Mills. Readjustment to military life must have been a challenge for the thirty-one year-old second lieutenant, but he made the most of it as his training carried him to Arkansas, Georgia, Texas and Louisiana before heading to Fort Meade, MD for shipment to England. Once in the British Isles, Murphy was assigned to the 115th Regiment. The Regiment, assigned to the 29th 'Blue and Gray' Infantry Division, had been attached to the 1st Infantry Division for the coming invasion of Europe.

As he approached the beach, Murphy must have been stunned by the cacophony, carnage and confusion. Assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry Regiment, Murphy was heading into a maelstrom as fierce and frightening as Hell itself. From their fortified positions on the bluff overlooking the beach, German gunners were raking the invaders with machine gun and mortar fire. A landscape littered with dead and wounded soldiers, burned and destroyed vehicles greeted Murphy and his comrades as they jumped out into the cold surf and began to battle their way toward the defenders. It was 1100 hours, June, 6, 1944. The surf line was nearing high tide at Omaha Beach. And the tide of battle was about to turn for the Americans.



Headquarters Company battled across the beach, witnessing simultaneous acts of heroism and slaughter. It saw action throughout D-Day and into the night, losing the battalion commander

to enemy fire. On June 14, as the Allies fought to enlarge the beachhead in the face of determined German resistance, Murphy was transferred to Company G to help make up for its combat losses. Murphy was probably assigned as a platoon leader. On June 18, in the treacherous fighting among the now infamous Norman hedgerows in the vicinity of the Bois de Bretel, about 2 miles north of the key road junction Saint Lo, Murphy was listed as missing in action. His status was changed to killed in action on August 7.

He was survived by his wife, the former Decca Singleton Halsey of Charleston. Tom Murphy was awarded the Purple Heart and was laid to rest in the Brittany American Cemetery, St. James (Manche, France) Plot M Row 1 Grave 7; Service # O-304549.

In a period of unprecedented world upheaval, Tom Murphy fought and died to stop mankind's slide into the dark abyss of tyranny and to return democracy and self-determination to Europe.

