

Cherbourg

The 4th Infantry Division landed in the first wave on Utah Beach on D-Day. In contrast with the carnage on neighboring Omaha Beach, the opposition at Utah was light. In fact, more men were killed training for the Utah Beach landings than actually fell that day on Utah. Denny Lewis Starr, Clemson College Class of 1939, was a corporal in the division's 12th Infantry Regiment.

Denny Starr was a general science major from Walterboro. He was a member of the Colletonians, made up of the boys from Colleton County. A senior private, he was assigned to Senior Company #1. He attended Clemson from 1936 to 1939 but left campus early in his senior year to take a job with the Edisto Auto Finance Company. He later joined his father in the family business.

In May 1940, Starr married Louise Boggs of Liberty. He entered military service as a private in September 1943 and was trained at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, near Macon. While there, Louise gave birth to their son, Denny Joe, in February 1944. From Camp Wheeler, Starr was ordered to Fort Meade, Maryland and then on to England, where he was assigned to E Company, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division.

On June 6, the 4th Infantry Division led the way across Utah Beach, moving toward the west. Once securely established ashore, the Americans set their sights on driving across the base of the Cotentin Peninsula to isolate the Germans holding Cherbourg. Allied logisticians needed the ports of Cherbourg in the west and Antwerp to the northwest to bring in the men, equipment, ammunition, and supplies necessary to mount and maintain a 50-division offensive through France and into Germany.

Of course, the Germans also realized the importance of Cherbourg. The defenders fought tenaciously and made effective use of Normandy's prominent terrain feature, the hedgerow. The hedgerows bordered practically every field with a six-foot high, mounded hedge. Behind each of these was a sunken farm road. Writing one hundred years earlier, Honoré de Balzac, the French writer, had compared the hedges to "the moats of fortresses." The Germans employed them as such and to significant advantage. The resulting combat was close and brutal with American advances often measured in yards.

On June 25, as the 4th Infantry Division slugged its way toward Cherbourg, Corporal Starr was killed in action. He was initially buried in the Normandy American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. After the war, his remains were returned to Walterboro where he was laid to rest in the family plot.



Denny Lewis Starr was survived by his wife, his parents, and his infant son. He was awarded the Purple Heart.

