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# The Round Tablette

*Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)*

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**Welcome to the 24 October meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table.** Welcome to the second of our October sessions of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Patrick O' Donnell, author of *Dog Company: The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, discussing the courageous achievements of "D" Company as part of the 2nd Ranger Battalion.

It is often hard to believe how much impact a company-sized unit can have on a battle. That is what happened at Pointe Du Hoc. Like the men who fought there, the larger D-Day landings obscured Pointe Du Hoc, a peninsula of jagged stony cliffs that juts out between the Utah and Omaha Beaches. The Germans mounted 155 mm artillery pieces there to provide enfilade fire on the potential landing sites of Omaha beach. It would be the responsibility of the Rangers to scale the 110 foot heights and take out the German positions in order to protect the Allied forces coming ashore.

The Rangers were the American army's first foray into what is now known as special operation units. The actual term "Ranger" goes back to the colonial era when a group was first commissioned in 1676 during King Philip's War. In this earlier era the most famous American Ranger was Robert Rogers, who developed a manual of twenty-eight "Rules of Ranging" that present day Rangers still have to learn. In the Revolutionary War and the Civil War there were also units known as Rangers. The World War II incarnation came about when then Lt. Col.

Lucian K. Truscott encouraged General George Marshall to create a training program along the same lines as British Commando units. Marshall liked the idea but did not want them to be called "commando" since it sounded too British. Truscott, who remembered Robert's colonial era group suggested "Rangers." Major William O. Darby, of the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, formed the first "Ranger" unit, mainly with men from the 34<sup>th</sup> ID. That 1st Ranger Battalion trained with British commandos and went on to spearhead the assaults in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The 2nd Ranger Battalion was formed in April 1943 and trained for the mission of Pointe Du Hoc.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Rangers went through several commanders during training, before finding the commander who would lead them on their most famous mission: James Earl Rudder. (They became known as "Rudder's Rangers.") His mission was to improve the unit's overall military bearing and efficiency, while conducting map reading exercises, learning stealthy movement, and landing craft loading. They trained for months in England with British Commandos and leant to climb cliffs, often under live fire conditions, a skill crucial to their D-Day mission.

Tasked with taking out the six 155mm guns the Germans had positioned at Pointe du Hoc, the men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalion, made the assault climb up the cliffs, only to find no guns at the top of the cliff. The Germans had removed them to construct casements. A small patrol found the five remaining guns in a nearby field (one was destroyed earlier in a bombing raid) and disabled them using thermite grenades.

Holding the position until elements of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division joined them on 7 June

**If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)**

was the most costly part of the entire operation. After the battle, some Rangers, convinced that a few French civilians had aided the Germans in their attacks, executed them without formality.

With a perspective of almost seventy years, the landings at Normandy seem pristine in their execution and their success inevitable. That was not the case in the real events of June 6, 1944; landing craft sank, bombs did not hit their targets, paratroopers were lost and German guns were not where they were supposed to be. The Rangers mirrored the overall D-Day reality – the Germans being more surprised and screwed up than the Allies.

**Further Reading:**

Patrick O'Donnell, *Dog Company: The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc* (Philadelphia, PA: DaCapo Press, 2012).

Patrick O' Donnell, *Beyond Valor: World War II's Ranger and Airborne Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

Ronald Lane, *Rudder's Rangers: The True Story of the 2nd Ranger Battalion's D-Day Combat Action* (Longwood FL: Ranger Associates, Inc., 1994).

Col. Robert Black, *The Battalion: the Dramatic Story of the 2nd Ranger Battalion in World War II* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006).

Thomas Hatfield, *Rudder: From Leader to Legend* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).

Marcia Moen & Margo Heinen, *The Fool Lieutenant* (Elk River, MN: Meadowlark Publishing, 2000).

**Announcements:**

**Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** -  
Nov. 19, 2013 – Confederate Supply System -  
[www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - [info@tccwrt.com](mailto:info@tccwrt.com)

**St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** - Oct. 28, 2013  
– 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota W. Jorgenson - 715-386-1268 –  
[rossandhaines@comcast.net](mailto:rossandhaines@comcast.net)

**Rochester WWII History Round Table** –507-280-9970;  
[www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org](http://www.ww2roundtable-rochester.org)

**Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy  
115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050,

<http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>

**Air Show - Eden Prairie** - July 19-20, 2014;  
<http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100

**Honor Flight** - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail.com](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) -  
651-338-2717

**CAF - Commemorative Air Force** -  
[www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org) 651-455-6942

**Minnesota Air Guard Museum** -  
[www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-2523

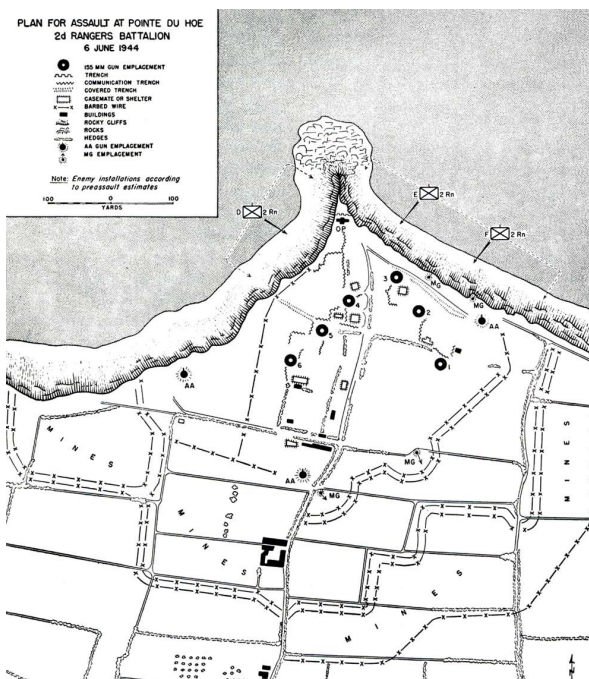
**Friends of Ft. Snelling**, [www.fortsnelling.org](http://www.fortsnelling.org)

**Fagen Museum**, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644,  
<http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.

**Round Table Schedule 2013-2014**

- 14 Nov. Deutsch Lecture: Codebreakers
- 12 Dec. Pearl Harbor
- 9 Jan. Eastern Front
- 13 Feb. Encounters with WW2 Leaders
- 13 Mar. Operation COBRA and Falaise
- 27 Mar. World War II in China
- 10 Apr. Rabaul and the SW Pacific
- 8 May Landing on Omaha Beach
- 10-27 May Tour of Normandy

**If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns** – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)



The Plan (above), the Rope Ladders (below)

