

EASY COMPANY

EUROPEAN WAR ROUTE

WWII • 1944 - 1945



FM 506-E · FIELD MANUAL · COMMON REFERENCE

EASY COMPANY

COMMON REFERENCE

Company E · 506th Parachute Infantry · 101st Airborne Division

The pages shared by all three guides:

- The accuracy labels
- Words to know
- Using your location, the radio stories and the map buttons
- Origins – how the Airborne, and Easy Company, came to be
- The Men – 25 biographies and their decorations
- The Armoury – weapons & ammunition
- Honor them

Use with: Normandy · Holland, Bastogne & Alsace · Germany & Austria

EASY COMPANY — COMMON REFERENCE

SHARED BY ALL THREE GUIDES

These pages are the same in **Normandy, Holland & Bastogne** and **Germany & Austria**. They are printed once here so the three campaign PDFs do not repeat them.

THE ACCURACY LABELS

Every position in the guides carries a coloured label saying how sure we are of the spot:

HIGH	exact spot known – a landmark, museum, memorial or town
MEDIUM	well supported, but the exact spot is uncertain
LOW	general area only – the pin is the centre of a search area

WORDS TO KNOW

E Company	"Easy" Company – about 140 men of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment – about 2,000 paratroopers
101st	the 101st Airborne Division, "Screaming Eagles"
CP	command post – where the officers ran the fight
DZ	drop zone – the field the paratroopers were meant to land in
Stick	the 15–18 men who jumped from one plane
C-47	the twin-engine transport plane that carried them
XO	executive officer – the second-in-command
NCO	sergeants and corporals
Flak	anti-aircraft fire

USING YOUR LOCATION

Tap the  button at the top right and allow location when your phone asks. You then get a blue **YOU** dot on the maps, the distance and direction to every stop, a **Near me** list of the ten closest waypoints, and a pop-up when you reach one – within about 120 m of a green **HIGH** pin, 300 m of a yellow **MEDIUM** and 800 m of a red **LOW** area. The app has to be open on screen, and it works when opened from its web address (<https://...>). **Your location never leaves your phone** – nothing is sent or stored anywhere. Tap **Turn off** to stop.

STORIES ON THE RADIO

Most stops carry a narrated story, about a minute long. Tap the **radio** button on a stop, or on the arrival pop-up when you reach a waypoint, to hear what happened there. A player appears at the bottom of the screen; it keeps playing if you lock your phone. Use headphones at cemeteries and memorials.

USING THE MAP BUTTONS

The **Google Maps** button on every stop opens a pin on the exact waypoint – not directions from where you are – so you can see the spot first and ask for directions when you want them. On the Tour tab each day also has a big **Google Maps route** button that loads the whole day's stops, in order, as one route. Tap ✓ on a stop to mark it visited – the tick is remembered on this device only.

ORIGINS — HOW THE AIRBORNE, AND EASY COMPANY, CAME TO BE

BACKGROUND BRIEFING · READ BEFORE THE TIMELINE

Before the first C-47 lifted off for Normandy, the men of Easy Company had spent two years becoming something the U.S. Army had never fielded before: a rifle company built from raw volunteers into paratroopers. This page explains where the idea of airborne troops came from, how the 101st and the 506th were raised, what a company, battalion and regiment actually are, and what Easy did from its first day at Camp Toccoa to the night it jumped into France.

1 · THE IDEA OF SOLDIERS FROM THE SKY

Borrowed from Europe. The Soviet Union staged the first mass parachute drops in the mid-1930s, and Germany's Fallschirmjäger proved the idea in war: in May 1940 German paratroopers and glider troops seized the Belgian fortress of Eben-Emael and bridges in the Netherlands in hours, and in May 1941 they captured Crete – at terrible cost, but they captured it. The U.S. Army, still small and under-equipped, took notice.

The Test Platoon. In June 1940 the Army formed a 48-man Parachute Test Platoon at Fort Benning, Georgia, drawn from volunteers of the 29th Infantry. They made their first jumps in August 1940 from a Douglas B-18 bomber. Within weeks the Army activated the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion — the first American parachute unit — and Benning became the home of jump school. Everything the 506th later learned about static lines, the five-jump qualification course and the "Geronimo!" shout began with that platoon.

From battalions to divisions. Through 1941-42 the parachute battalions grew into regiments, and on 15-16 August 1942 the Army did something bold: at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, it redesignated the veteran 82nd Infantry Division as an airborne division and activated a second one beside it, built from 82nd cadres and personnel — the **82nd** and the **101st**. The 101st's first commander, Major General William C. Lee, told his men that the new division "has no history, but it has a rendezvous with destiny". An airborne division mixed two kinds of infantry: **parachute** regiments that jumped, and **glider** regiments towed in behind them in wooden-and-canvas Waco gliders, plus airborne artillery, engineers and medics.

2 · THE 506TH — A REGIMENT BUILT FROM SCRATCH

Camp Toccoa, 20 July 1942. The 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment was activated at Camp Toccoa (briefly Camp Toombs; 20 July is the official date, some histories give 1 July) in the Georgia hills under Colonel Robert F. Sink, who would command it for the entire war. It was an experiment. Every earlier parachute unit had recruited men who were already trained soldiers; the 506th took volunteers largely straight from induction — many with little or no prior Army training — and turned them into infantrymen and paratroopers in one place. The Army was not sure it would work.

Currahee. The camp sat under Currahee Mountain, and the run to its summit — "three miles up, three miles down" — became the regiment's daily test and its motto (Cherokee for "stands alone"). The selection was brutal by design: by Stephen Ambrose's count, of roughly 5,300 enlisted volunteers about 1,800 survived to become the regiment, and of some 500 officers around 150 were kept — other histories give different applicant and completion totals. The rest were sent to ordinary infantry units. The men who stayed had already done the hardest thing the Army could think of before they had ever seen a parachute.

Easy Company. The regiment's 2nd Battalion held companies D, E and F plus a headquarters company. Company E – "Easy" in the phonetic alphabet of the day – was formed with 132 enlisted men and 8 officers (Ambrose's figures) under Captain Herbert Sobel, with Lieutenants Clarence Hester and Richard Winters among his platoon leaders. Sobel was a demanding, often petty commander who was disliked by nearly everyone, but he drove Easy to become the fittest company in the regiment: extra runs, extra field problems, revoked weekend passes. Much of the company's later cohesion came from the shared experience of enduring him.

3 · HOW THE ARMY WAS ORGANISED

Every rung is built from about three of the rung below it, plus a small headquarters. Figures are the 1944 parachute-infantry establishment and are approximate – real companies were often under strength. Easy's own chain of command on D-Day is shown on the right.



PLATOON

3 rifle squads + 60 mm mortar
squad · ~36-40 · Lieutenant

1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons of Easy

IS MADE OF ▼

SQUAD

Riflemen, a BAR or light MG
team, a scout pair · ~12 ·
Sergeant

The "stick" of 15-18 men in one C-47 was
usually a squad plus attachments

UNIT	MADE UP OF	ROUGH SIZE	LED BY
Squad	about 12 riflemen and gunners	12	Staff sergeant / sergeant
Platoon	3 rifle squads + a mortar squad	36-40	Lieutenant
Company	3 rifle platoons + headquarters	130-140	Captain
Battalion	3 rifle companies + HQ company	530-600	Lieutenant colonel
Regiment	3 battalions + HQ, service & medical	≈2,000	Colonel
Division	3-4 regiments + artillery, engineers, signals, medics	12,000- 14,000	Major general
Corps	2-4 divisions	30,000- 60,000	Major general
Army	2-4 corps	100,000+	General

THE 101ST AIRBORNE ON D-DAY — WHAT THE DIVISION CONTAINED

Parachute infantry: 501st, 502nd and 506th PIR (three battalions each). **Glider infantry:** 327th GIR, with a battalion of the 401st attached. **Artillery:** 377th Parachute Field Artillery, 321st and 907th Glider Field Artillery, 81st Airborne Anti-Aircraft. **Support:** 326th Airborne Engineers, 326th Airborne Medical Company, signals, quartermaster, ordnance and military police. About 6,600 men of the division jumped in the early hours of 6 June; the gliders and the sea-borne echelon brought the rest.

Company names. In 1944 the Army spelt out letters as Able, Baker, Charlie, Dog, Easy, Fox, George, How, Item. A regiment's nine rifle companies ran A-I: A, B, C in 1st Battalion; D, E, F in 2nd; G, H, I in 3rd. So "Easy Company" always means E Company, and in the 506th that put it in Strayer's 2nd Battalion alongside Dog and Fox.

4 · EASY COMPANY FROM TOCCOA TO THE DROP ZONE

The company's whole life before combat, in order. Dates from Stephen Ambrose's history of Easy Company and the 506th's own records; where sources disagree the more cautious figure is used.

20 JUL 1942

Activated at Camp Toccoa, Georgia. The 506th is raised under Col. Sink. Easy Company forms in 2nd Battalion under Capt. Sobel. Volunteers arrive as civilians and are put straight onto Currahee.

JUL - NOV 1942

Toccoa. Thirteen weeks of basic and parachute-infantry training in one: daily Currahee runs, obstacle course, weapons, night problems, a mock tower and rudimentary ground-training rigs (the 250-foot free towers were at Fort Benning, where the men would qualify). Roughly two of every three volunteers wash out. Sobel's "Easy" earns a reputation as the fittest company in the regiment.

1 - 4 DEC 1942

The march to Atlanta. Answering a newspaper claim of a Japanese army marching record, Sink has 2nd Battalion walk from Toccoa to Atlanta – about 118 miles by Ambrose's count (the regiment recorded 137) – in three days of rain, mud and frozen roads, with almost every man finishing. From Atlanta they go by train to Fort Benning.

DEC 1942

Jump school, Fort Benning. Because Toccoa had already done the physical stages, Easy goes almost straight to the towers and then to the aircraft. Five qualifying jumps from C-47s earn every man his silver wings and the right to blouse his trousers into jump boots.

JAN - MAR 1943

Furlough, then Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Jump training finished around Christmas; after leave and further weeks at Benning the regiment moved in March 1943 to the new airborne training centre at Mackall for company- and battalion-level tactics, live fire and more jumps.

10 JUN 1943

Joined to the 101st Airborne. The 506th is formally assigned to the 101st, which is training at Fort Bragg. Easy takes part in the large Tennessee manoeuvres that summer – its first exercises as part of a division.

AUG - SEP 1943

Camp Shanks, New York → SS Samaria. After a final stop at Fort Bragg the regiment stages at Camp Shanks and sails from New York on 5 September aboard the crowded troopship *Samaria*, docking at Liverpool on 15 September 1943.

SEP 1943 - MAY 1944

Aldbourne, Wiltshire. Easy is billeted in the village of Aldbourne for nine months – Nissen huts and private homes, the Blue Boar pub, English rain. Training turns to what Normandy will demand: night jumps, hedgerow assaults, street fighting in bombed-out towns, long field exercises on Salisbury Plain and at Slapton Sands in Devon.

OCT 1943 - FEB 1944

The Sobel crisis. Sobel's tactical blunders in the field, and his attempt to court-martial Winters over a trivial order, bring the company's sergeants to the edge of mutiny – several hand in their stripes rather than go into combat under him. Sink breaks up the protest, busts two NCOs, and in February 1944 moves Sobel to command the parachute school at Chilton Foliat. **1st Lt. Thomas Meehan** takes over Easy; Winters becomes executive officer.

MAR 1944

New division commander. Gen. Lee suffers a heart attack; Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor takes command of the 101st on 14 March. Some of his men are reported to have shouted "Bill Lee" rather than "Geronimo" as they jumped into Normandy; others shouted "Currahee", and many nothing at all.

11 - 12 MAY 1944

Exercise Eagle. The 101st's full dress rehearsal: a night mass drop over Berkshire mimicking the Normandy plan. Scattered sticks and a few injuries preview what June will bring.

LATE MAY 1944

Marshalling at Upottery, Devon. Easy moves to a sealed airfield near Honiton. Only now are the men briefed on sand tables and maps: Drop Zone C near Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, and 2nd Battalion's job – secure the inland ends of the causeways (Exits 1 and 2) off Utah Beach so the 4th Infantry Division can get off the sand.

4 - 5 JUN 1944

Postponed, then go. Bad weather scrubs the 4 June take-off. On the evening of 5 June, faces blackened, each man carrying 70-100 lb of gear, Easy boards C-47s of the 439th Troop Carrier Group. Eisenhower's message is read out; the serials begin taking off from about 22:30, with Easy's aircraft airborne by around 23:10.

6 JUN 1944 · ≈ 01:10

Into France. Flak and cloud over the Cotentin scatter the formation. Easy's men jump across miles of Normandy; Lt. Meehan's aircraft is shot down with all aboard. Winters lands near Sainte-Mère-Église without his weapon. What happens next is the **Timeline** tab.

Why it matters. By 6 June 1944 Easy had been together for nearly two years – longer than almost any American rifle company would be by the end of the war. That shared history, more than any single leader, is why a scattered company could reassemble in the dark and take Brécourt Manor by mid-morning.

FURTHER READING

SOURCES FOR THIS PAGE

[506th Infantry Regiment \(Wikipedia\)](#) [Camp Toccoa \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[101st Airborne Division \(Wikipedia\)](#) [Robert F. Sink \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[506th PIR memorial, Toccoa \(HMdb\)](#) [Currahee Military Museum, Toccoa](#)

Book: Stephen E. Ambrose's 1992 history of Easy Company, chapters 1-4.

THE MEN

THE COMPANY'S WAR IN BRIEF

Easy Company was one of the first American rifle companies built entirely from paratrooper volunteers. It fought from the night drop into Normandy to the end of the war in the Alps, and it lost 48 men killed along the way (the Winters/Ambrose count; other rosters give 49).

Toccoa, 1942-43. Company E of the 506th Parachute Infantry was formed at Camp Toccoa, Georgia, in summer 1942 under Capt. Herbert Sobel. Most of its men came straight from civilian life. They ran Currahee Mountain – "three miles up, three miles down" – until only the toughest were left, then trained at Benning, Mackall and Bragg before sailing for England in September 1943.

England, 1943-44. The company trained at Aldbourne, Wiltshire. Sobel's clash with his platoon leader Richard Winters led almost every sergeant to hand in his stripes. Sobel was moved out and 1st Lt. Thomas Meehan took command.

Normandy, June-July 1944. Easy jumped behind Utah Beach on the night of 5-6 June. Meehan's plane was shot down and everyone aboard was killed, so Winters took command. That morning he led about a dozen men against the guns at Brécourt Manor. Easy then fought at Carentan and Bloody Gulch and sailed back to England in July.

Holland, September-November 1944. Easy jumped into Holland on 17 September for Market Garden. It entered Eindhoven, was thrown back at Nuenen, and spent weeks on "the Island" between the rivers. On 5 October Winters led the crossroads attack and was then promoted to battalion executive officer. The company helped rescue about 138 Allied soldiers, mostly British airborne troops, in Operation Pegasus.

Bastogne, December 1944-January 1945. Rushed to the Ardennes with too little winter clothing and ammunition, Easy held the edge of the Bois Jacques above Foy. Shelling cost the company Toye's and Guarnere's legs and the lives of Muck and Penkala. On 13 January Lt. Ronald Speirs took over in the middle of the attack on Foy, and the company went on to Noville and Rachamps.

Haguenau and Germany, 1945. Easy held the Moder river in Alsace in February 1945. It then watched the Ruhr pocket from the Rhine and moved into Bavaria, where on 28-29 April it entered a Kaufering camp near Landsberg. On 5 May it reached Berchtesgaden and the Obersalzberg.

Austria and home, 1945. After Germany surrendered, Easy occupied Zell am See and Kaprun in Austria. It moved to France in the summer to train for

Japan, but the war ended first. The 101st Airborne was inactivated on 30 November 1945.

Twenty-five of the men who made Easy Company. Tap a name to read his story, the medals he earned and what became of him. The coloured ribbons show his decorations.

THE OFFICERS

1

RICHARD D. WINTERS



"Dick"

Platoon leader, company commander, then battalion commander

Born 21 Jan 1918, New Holland, Pennsylvania · died 2 Jan 2011, Campbelltown, Pennsylvania

An economics graduate of Franklin & Marshall College, Winters joined Easy at Toccoa in 1942 as a platoon leader. When Lt. Meehan was killed on D-Day he took command, and that morning led about a dozen men against the four guns at Brécourt Manor. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor and received the Distinguished Service Cross. He was wounded at Carentan and led the crossroads attack in Holland on 5 October 1944, then became battalion executive officer and later its commander, ending the war as a major. Calm, sober and devout, he was the man Easy trusted most.

DECORATIONS

-  Distinguished Service Cross — leading the attack on the guns at Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944 (he had been recommended for the Medal of Honor)
-  Bronze Star — reason not recorded (some records show a second)
-  Purple Heart — wounded in the leg at Carentan, June 1944

After the war: Worked for the Nixon family firm, then ran his own animal-feed business in Hershey. Wrote a memoir with Col. Cole Kingseed (2006).

2

LEWIS NIXON III



"Nix"

Battalion intelligence officer, Winters' closest friend

Born 30 Sep 1918, New York City · died 11 Jan 1995, Los Angeles

The wealthy, Yale-educated son of an industrial family, Nixon was never in Easy itself but served on 2nd Battalion staff beside it from Toccoa onward. He jumped into Normandy and Holland, where a bullet grazed his forehead. In March 1945 he jumped with the 17th Airborne in Operation Varsity; his plane was hit and only four men got out. He drank heavily during the war, and Winters stood by him throughout.

DECORATIONS

-  Bronze Star — reason not recorded (some sources say two)

Parachute wings with three combat-jump stars – Normandy, Holland and Operation Varsity, a rare set

After the war: Brought Winters into the family business; later remarried and gave up drinking.

3

HERBERT M. SOBEL

Easy's first commander



Born 26 Jan 1912, Chicago · died 30 Sep 1987, Waukegan, Illinois

Sobel built Easy at Toccoa and drove it relentlessly: extra runs, harsh punishments, cancelled passes. His men found him petty and doubted his judgement in the field. When he court-martialled Winters in England, nearly every sergeant offered to give up his stripes, and he was moved out in early 1944. He went on to run a parachute school and later served as the regiment's supply officer, and he jumped on D-Day. Several veterans later credited him with making Easy as tough as it was.

DECORATIONS



Bronze Star – no citation survives; one account links it to D-Day, when he and four men knocked out a German machine-gun nest with grenades

After the war: Worked in Chicago as a credit manager; spent his last years in a veterans' home.

4

THOMAS MEEHAN III

Company commander, Feb-June 1944

KILLED IN ACTION

Born 8 Jul 1921, Philadelphia · killed in action 6 Jun 1944, near Beuzeville-au-Plain, Normandy

A Philadelphia art student who transferred to Easy from B Company, Meehan took command after Sobel left. On D-Day he led the company headquarters in C-47 "Chalk 66". The plane was hit by flak and crashed near Beuzeville-au-Plain; everyone aboard was killed, including 1st Sgt. William Evans. Easy did not learn his fate until long after. The wreck was found in the early 1950s and reportedly excavated in 1989; a memorial now marks the site.

DECORATIONS

None found beyond his parachute wings and Combat Infantryman Badge. A posthumous Purple Heart is standard for men killed in action, but no record of it was found.

5

RONALD C. SPEIRS**"Sparky"**

Easy's longest-serving commander, Jan 1945 to the end

Born 20 Apr 1920, Edinburgh, Scotland · died 11 Apr 2007, Montana

Brought up in Boston, Speirs fought in Normandy with D Company, including at Brécourt, and was wounded. He won the Silver Star in Holland for a solo patrol across the Lower Rhine. On 13 January 1945, in the attack on Foy, Winters sent him to take over Easy mid-battle; he famously ran through the German-held village to reach I Company and back. He led Easy through Haguenau, Germany and Austria. Stories that he shot prisoners were never confirmed.

DECORATIONS

-  Silver Star – swam the Lower Rhine (Neder Rijn) alone near Randwijk to scout German positions and came back with a captured boat, 10 October 1944, wounded on the way back
-  Bronze Star – reason not recorded (number not confirmed)
-  Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – wounded in Normandy, June 1944, and in Holland, 10 October 1944
-  Legion of Merit – after the war, for service from October 1961 to March 1964, a period that included Laos

After the war: Stayed in the Army – Korea, US governor of Spandau Prison in Berlin, Laos; retired a lieutenant colonel.

6

LYNN COMPTON**"Buck"**

Platoon leader

Born 31 Dec 1921, Los Angeles · died 25 Feb 2012, Burlington, Washington

A UCLA catcher and Rose Bowl footballer, Compton won the Silver Star at Brécourt Manor. He was shot through the buttocks in Holland and came back to lead his platoon at Bastogne. After watching his friends Toye and Guarnere lose their legs in January 1945, he was evacuated with severe trench foot.

DECORATIONS

-  Silver Star – Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944
-  Bronze Star – reason not recorded
-  Purple Heart – shot through the buttocks in Holland, September 1944

After the war: Police detective, then prosecutor who led the case against Robert Kennedy's assassin, Sirhan Sirhan (1969); California appeals court judge 1970-90.

7

HARRY F. WELSH**"Welshy"**

Platoon leader, later executive officer

Born 27 Sep 1918, Pennsylvania · died 21 Jan 1995, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

A former enlisted paratrooper who reportedly won and lost his sergeant's stripes several times for fighting, Welsh went to officer school and joined Easy. He led 1st Platoon into Carentan and was wounded at Bastogne at Christmas 1944, returning in 1945. He was Winters' closest friend in the company.

DECORATIONS

-  Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – reasons not recorded
-  Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – one for the mortar wound at Bastogne, Christmas 1944; the other wound is not recorded

After the war: Married Kitty Grogan, a friend of Winters, in a wedding dress made from parachute silk; taught at GAR and Coughlin high schools in Wilkes-Barre, then was Director of Pupil Services for the Wilkes-Barre Area School District until 1983.

8

FREDERICK HEYLIGER**"Moose"**

Company commander, Oct 1944

Born 23 Jun 1916, Acton, Massachusetts · died 3 Nov 2001, Concord, Massachusetts

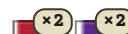
A big, well-liked former mortar platoon leader, Heyliger took command of Easy when Winters moved up in October 1944. He led the company in Operation Pegasus, the night rescue across the Rhine of about 138 Allied soldiers, mostly British, and received the British Military Cross. On 31 October he was badly wounded by one of his own sentries while checking the line with Winters, and he did not return.

DECORATIONS

-  British Military Cross – leading Operation Pegasus, the rescue of about 138 Allied evaders, mostly British, night of 22-23 October 1944
-  Bronze Star – citation not found
-  Purple Heart – shot by his own sentry on the Island, 31 October 1944

After the war: Studied horticulture at the University of Massachusetts.

9

NORMAN S. DIKE JR.**"Foxhole Norman"**

Company commander, Nov 1944 – 13 Jan 1945

Born 19 May 1918, Brooklyn, New York · died 23 Jun 1989, Rolle, Switzerland

A Brown graduate and Yale law student, Dike came from regimental staff to command Easy after Heyliger. The men felt he was rarely seen on the line, hence the nickname, yet he earned two Bronze Stars, one for carrying wounded men to safety at Bastogne. During the attack on Foy on 13 January 1945 the advance stalled and Winters replaced him with Speirs. Why it stalled is disputed (see the notes at the end).

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – rallying scattered paratroopers to hold the road junction at Uden, Holland, while surrounded, 23–25 September 1944

 Bronze Star (second award) – carrying three wounded men out of an exposed position under fire at Bastogne, 3 January 1945

 Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – one reportedly for a shoulder wound at Foy, 13 January 1945

One source adds a Silver Star; not confirmed.

After the war: Yale law degree, work in Japan and for the CIA, then a legal and business career; lived in Switzerland from 1960.

THE SERGEANTS

10

C. CARWOOD LIPTON



"Lip"

First sergeant, later lieutenant

Born 30 Jan 1920, Huntington, West Virginia · died 16 Dec 2001, North Carolina

His father was killed and his mother paralysed in a car crash when he was ten. Lipton enlisted in 1942 and was one of Easy's first privates. He fought at Brécourt Manor, was wounded at Carentan, and became first sergeant – the man who held the company together at Bastogne while its officers failed or fell. After Foy he was commissioned a lieutenant in the field, and he served through Germany and Austria.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944, where he climbed a tree to fire into the German position (some records show a second Bronze Star)

 Purple Heart – shell fragments to the face and groin at Carentan, June 1944; his headstone records two more, for three in all

After the war: Engineering degree from Marshall; a long career with the glassmaker Owens-Illinois.

11

WILLIAM GUARNERE**"Wild Bill"**

2nd Platoon sergeant



Born 28 Apr 1923, South Philadelphia · died 8 Mar 2014, Philadelphia

The youngest of ten in an Italian-American family, Guarnere built Sherman tanks before enlisting. He jumped into Normandy knowing his brother had just been killed in Italy, and fought with fury at Brécourt Manor, earning the Silver Star. Shot in the leg in Holland, he slipped out of hospital to rejoin the company. On 3 January 1945 near Foy he lost a leg to shellfire while helping the wounded Joe Toye.

DECORATIONS

Silver Star — Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944

Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster (two awards) — reasons not recorded

Purple Heart (two) — a sniper's bullet in the leg on the Island, October 1944, and the loss of his leg near Foy, 3 January 1945

After the war: Veterans' advocate; co-wrote *Brothers in Battle*, *Best of Friends* (2007) with Babe Heffron. Statues of him stand in Pennsylvania.

12

DONALD G. MALARKEY

Mortar sergeant



Born 31 Jul 1921, Astoria, Oregon · died 30 Sep 2017, Salem, Oregon

A University of Oregon student from the Columbia River coast, Malarkey fought at Brécourt and then in every Easy campaign. He is said to have spent more continuous time on the line than anyone in the company without being seriously wounded. The death of his close friends Skip Muck and Alex Penkala at Bastogne stayed with him all his life.

DECORATIONS

Bronze Star — Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944; a second Bronze Star, reason not recorded

Purple Heart — the wound is not recorded

French Legion of Honour — awarded in 2009 as a surviving veteran of the liberation of France

After the war: County commissioner in Oregon; wrote *Easy Company Soldier* (2008).

13

JOSEPH TOYE**"Joe"**

Squad leader



Born 14 Mar 1919, Hughestown, Pennsylvania · died 3 Sep 1995, Reading, Pennsylvania

A coal miner's son who left school to work in the mines, Toye was known as one of the toughest men in the company. He fought at Brécourt, was wounded in Holland and again at Bastogne, and on 3 January 1945 lost his right leg to shellfire in the Bois Jacques. He had more wounds than almost anyone in Easy.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944

 Purple Hearts – three or four (sources differ; a local marker calls it the most in Easy): shellfire in Holland, autumn 1944; wounds at Bastogne; and the loss of his leg near Foy, 3 January 1945

One site adds a Silver Star; not confirmed.

After the war: Worked at the Grace iron mine for Bethlehem Steel. Winters gave his eulogy.

14

FLOYD TALBERT



"Tab"

Squad leader, briefly first sergeant

Born 26 Aug 1923, Howard County, Indiana · died Oct 1982, Shasta Lake, California

Talbert was wounded in Normandy, reportedly by an Easy man who mistook him in the dark for a German. He came back to serve in Holland and at Bastogne and was made first sergeant, a job he later gave up to return to his men. Winters rated him among the finest soldiers in the company.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – reason not recorded

 Purple Heart – most likely for the bayonet wound in Normandy, June 1944

After the war: Worked in industry and farming; lost touch with Easy until a reunion in 1981.

15

DENVER RANDLEMAN



"Bull"

Squad leader

Born 20 Nov 1920, Rector, Arkansas · died 26 Jun 2003

A big, quiet Arkansan and former foundry worker, Randleman fought in Normandy and at Carentan. At Nuenen in Holland in September 1944 he was wounded and cut off; he hid in a barn, killed a German soldier who found him, and rejoined the company the next day. He went on through Bastogne, Foy and Haguenau.

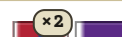
DECORATIONS

-  Bronze Star – reason not recorded
-  Purple Heart – shoulder wound from a tank shell in Holland, September 1944, the fight in which he hid in the barn

After the war: Service manager for a Caterpillar dealer, then construction superintendent in Louisiana.

16

WARREN MUCK



"Skip"

Sergeant, mortar squad

KILLED IN ACTION

Born 31 Jan 1922, Tonawanda, New York · killed in action 10 Jan 1945, Bois Jacques, near Foy, Belgium

A cheerful young man from upstate New York and Malarkey's closest friend, Muck jumped into Normandy and Holland. On 10 January 1945 a shell struck the foxhole he shared with Pvt. Alex Penkala in the Bois Jacques, killing both. Both are buried in the Luxembourg American Cemetery at Hamm.

DECORATIONS

-  Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – reasons not recorded
-  Purple Heart (posthumous) – killed in the Bois Jacques, 10 January 1945

17

DARRELL POWERS



"Shifty"

Rifleman and marksman, later staff sergeant

Born 13 Mar 1923, Clinchco, Virginia · died 17 Jun 2009, Bristol, Tennessee

Raised hunting in the Appalachian hills, Powers was one of Easy's best shots. At Bastogne he noticed a "tree that wasn't there yesterday" – a hidden German position – and at Foy he killed a sniper. He was never wounded in combat, but after winning the lottery for a trip home in 1945 he was badly hurt when his truck crashed on the way.

DECORATIONS

-  Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – reasons not recorded
- No Purple Heart: he was never wounded in combat.

After the war: Machinist, then more than 20 years with Clinchfield Coal; married to Dorothy for about 60 years.

THE MEN

18

EDWARD HEFFRON

"Babe"

Machine gunner



Born 16 May 1923, South Philadelphia · died 1 Dec 2013, Stratford, New Jersey

A shipyard worker from an Irish Catholic family, Heffron joined Easy as a replacement in England after Normandy. He jumped into Holland and fought at Bastogne, where in late December 1944 he was pinned down trying to reach his dying friend John Julian. He was at the Kaufering camp and in Berchtesgaden in 1945. He and Bill Guarneri, from the same neighbourhood, stayed best friends for life.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – Bastogne, winter 1944-45 (the action is not recorded)

 Purple Heart – the wound is not recorded

After the war: Worked at a whiskey distillery and then on the Philadelphia docks; co-wrote *Brothers in Battle*, *Best of Friends* (2007).

19

GEORGE LUZ

Company radio operator



Born 17 Jun 1921, Fall River, Massachusetts · died 15 Oct 1998, West Warwick, Rhode Island

The company's joker, famous for his impressions of officers, Luz carried Easy's radio from Normandy through Holland, Bastogne and into Germany and Austria. His humour kept men going in the worst moments of the siege.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – reason not recorded

 Purple Heart – the wound is not recorded

After the war: Maintenance work in Rhode Island; killed in an industrial accident. About 1,600 people came to his funeral.

20

DAVID KENYON WEBSTER

Rifleman and writer



Born 2 Jun 1922, New York City · lost at sea 9 Sep 1961, off Santa Monica, California

A Harvard English student who volunteered for the paratroopers, Webster jumped on D-Day with battalion headquarters and joined Easy afterwards. He was shot in the leg on the Island in Holland on 5 October 1944 and rejoined at Haguenau. His clear,

often critical writing about the war made him the company's chronicler, and Ambrose drew heavily on it.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – reason not recorded

 Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – a shell-fragment wound in Normandy, June 1944, and a machine-gun bullet through the leg on the Island, October 1944

After the war: Journalist. He vanished while sailing alone off Santa Monica in 1961; his memoir *Parachute Infantry* was published in 1994.

21

EUGENE ROE

"Doc"

Medic

x2

Born 17 Oct 1921 or 1922, Bayou Chêne, Louisiana · died 30 Dec 1998, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

A Cajun from St. Martin Parish, Roe was the battalion medic attached to Easy from Normandy to the end of the war. At Bastogne he worked in the snow and cold with almost no supplies, going from foxhole to foxhole under shellfire. His officer recommended him for the Silver Star, which he never received.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster (two awards) – reasons not recorded

Combat Medical Badge

Lt. Jack Foley recommended him for the Silver Star, but it was never approved. (One site lists a Purple Heart for a wound in Holland on 17 September 1944; not confirmed.)

After the war: Construction contractor in Louisiana.

22

JOSEPH LIEBGOTT

Rifleman and German interpreter



Born 17 May 1915, Michigan · died 28 Jun 1992, San Bernardino, California

The son of German-speaking immigrants, Liebgott grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and worked as a barber. He fought at Brécourt and Carentan, was wounded twice on the Island in Holland, and fought at Bastogne. In 1945 his German made him Easy's interpreter, including at the Kaufering camp. Many of his comrades assumed he was Jewish; his family says he was not.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944

He was wounded twice, but no Purple Heart record was found.

After the war: Barber in the Bay Area; father of eight.

23

ALBERT BLITHE

Rifleman



Born 25 Jun 1923, Philadelphia · died 17 Dec 1967, Wiesbaden, West Germany

Blithe jumped into Normandy and, around Carentan, suffered a brief stress-induced blindness. He was then shot by a sniper in the collarbone and shoulder – his Purple Heart is dated 25 June 1944, his 21st birthday – and did not return to Easy. Early accounts said he died of his wounds in 1948; that is wrong.

DECORATIONS

Purple Heart – sniper's bullet in the shoulder near Carentan, 25 June 1944

His career record lists a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars and three Purple Hearts in all; most accounts place the Silver Star and a Bronze Star in Korea, for a jump behind enemy lines with the 187th Airborne, but the dates are not confirmed.

After the war: Stayed in the Army; served in Korea with the 187th Airborne, earning a Silver Star, and died on active duty as a master sergeant. Buried at Arlington.

24

EDWARD D. SHAMES

Platoon leader



Born 13 Jun 1922, Norfolk, Virginia · died 3 Dec 2021, Virginia

The son of Jewish immigrants, Shames joined as an I Company paratrooper, became a 3rd Battalion operations sergeant, and received a battlefield commission in Normandy on his 22nd birthday. He joined Easy as a platoon leader, volunteered for the Pegasus rescue, and fought at Bastogne and Foy, where he helped knock out a German tank with a bazooka. At Berchtesgaden in May 1945 he took cognac labelled for Hitler's own use.

DECORATIONS

Bronze Star – reason not recorded

Purple Heart – a leg wound (sources give one to three awards)

Also: Dutch War Commemoration Cross.

After the war: Middle East specialist at the National Security Agency; he used the cognac for his son's Bar Mitzvah. He was the last surviving Easy officer.

**"Smokey"**

Machine gunner

Born 15 Apr 1920 or 1921, Jackson, Mississippi · died 19 Apr 1997, Mississippi

A college student turned down by the Marines and Navy, Gordon was with Easy from Toccoa. He jumped into Normandy and Holland. On Christmas Eve 1944 at Bastogne a sniper's bullet passed through both shoulders and grazed his spine, paralysing him for a time; he never returned to combat.

DECORATIONS

 Bronze Star – reason not recorded

 Purple Heart – for his wounds at Carentan (13 June 1944) and Bastogne (24 December 1944); records show one award

After the war: Law degree, then a career as an oil and gas lease broker in Louisiana; organised Easy Company reunions from 1946.

▼ ABOUT THE DECORATIONS

The most decorated single action was Brécourt Manor on D-Day: Winters received the Distinguished Service Cross; Compton, Guarnere and Lt. Lorraine the Silver Star; and Lipton, Malarkey, Toye, Liebgott and several others the Bronze Star.

"Reason not recorded" means no citation survives online. After the war, in 1947, the Army gave a Bronze Star to every soldier who had earned the Combat Infantryman Badge (or the Combat Medical Badge, for medics). That is the likely reason for many of these Bronze Stars, but it is not confirmed for any one man.

Every man here also shared the unit awards, so they are not repeated on each card: the Presidential Unit Citation for Normandy and again for Bastogne, the Dutch Orange Lanyard for Holland, the Belgian Fourragère, and the French Croix de Guerre with palm for Normandy.

Oak leaf cluster = a second (or further) award of the same medal.

▼ WHERE THE SOURCES DISAGREE

These bios follow the best-supported version.

DIKE

Winters, Lipton and most witnesses say he froze at Foy; Clancy Lyall later said he had been hit in the shoulder. This guide says only that the advance stalled.

SPEIRS

Stories that he shot German prisoners in Normandy; no eyewitness confirms them.

SOBEL

Remembered as a petty tyrant, but several veterans credit him with making Easy tough; the TV drama leaves out his D-Day jump.

BLITHE

Early books and the TV drama said he died of his wounds in 1948 – he died in 1967; the wound was the collarbone/shoulder, not the neck.

LIEBGOTT

Often shown as Jewish; his family says he was not.

COMPTON

The TV drama showed him as shell-shocked; he blamed trench foot and exhaustion.

POWERS

The first edition of Ambrose said he refused a patrol at Bastogne; both he and Shames denied it and it was removed.

SHAMES

Whether he was among the first into the Eagle's Nest, and whether the cognac came from there or from Hitler's quarters below.

TALBERT

Ambrose describes a troubled post-war life; his family disputes it.

GORDON

His first wound: Carentan (June 1944) or near Eindhoven (Holland).

GUARNERE

Born 1922 or 1923; right or left leg lost.

WELSH

Wounded Christmas Eve or Christmas Day 1944; born in Audenried or Wilkes-Barre.

WINTERS

Recommended for the Medal of Honor for Brécourt; received the Distinguished Service Cross instead.

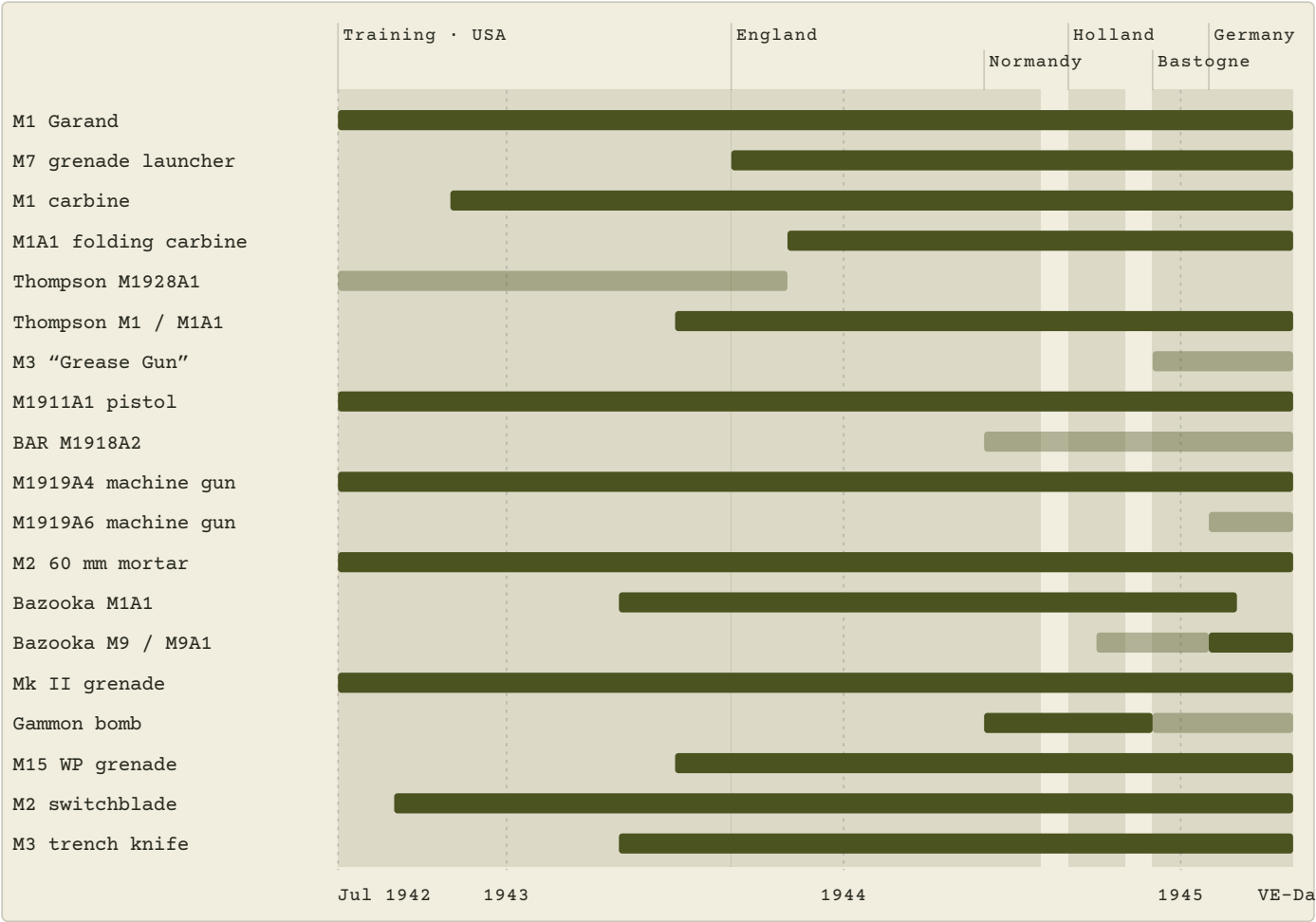
Sources: Stephen Ambrose's history of the company; Winters' and Webster's memoirs; TracesOfWar, Hall of Valor, Wikipedia, Find a Grave and obituaries.

Weapons & Ammunition of Easy Company

Every weapon the men of Easy Company trained with at Toccoa and carried into Normandy, Holland, Bastogne, Germany and Austria — when each one was in use, how it worked, what it did well and where it let them down.

What they carried, and when

Tap a row to jump to that weapon. Newer models arrived during the war, so some weapons appear twice. Shaded bands show where Easy Company was; “Germany” covers Haguenau (France), Germany and Austria in 1945. Dates for late-war arrivals are approximate: new equipment reached units at different times.



RIFLES & CARBINES

M1 Garand Rifle

“The greatest battle implement ever devised” — Gen. George S. Patton

In use: Jul 1942 – May 1945 · the whole war

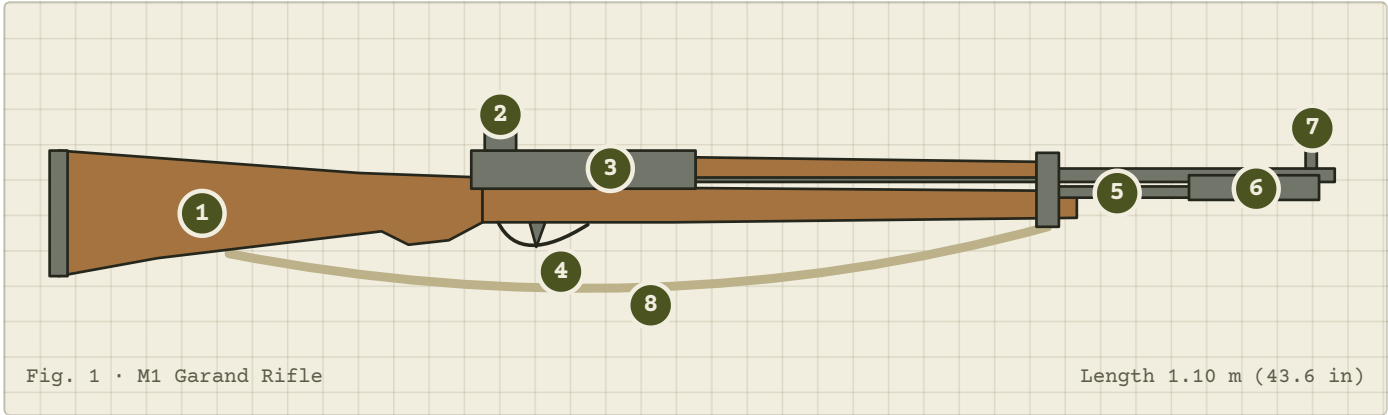


Fig. 1 · M1 Garand Rifle

Length 1.10 m (43.6 in)

- 1

Walnut stock
- 2

Adjustable rear sight
- 3

Receiver – 8-round clip loads from the top
- 4

Trigger & safety (inside front of trigger guard)
- 5

Operating rod – works the action by gas
- 6

Gas cylinder
- 7

Front sight
- 8

Leather or web sling

CALIBRE	.30-06 Springfield (7.62 × 63 mm)
ACTION	Gas-operated, semi-automatic
AMMUNITION	8-round en-bloc clip
WEIGHT	4.3 kg (9.5 lb) empty
LENGTH	1,107 mm (43.6 in)
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 450 m (500 yd)
RATE OF FIRE	40–50 aimed shots a minute
MUZZLE VELOCITY	about 850 m/s (2,800 ft/s)

The standard rifle of the US Army and of almost every rifleman in Easy Company. It was the first semi-automatic rifle ever issued as standard to a whole army: every pull of the trigger fired a shot and reloaded itself, while most German soldiers still had to work a bolt by hand between shots. Eight rounds came packed in a steel clip that was pushed into the top of the rifle; when the last shot was fired, the empty clip flew out with a distinctive “ping” and the action stayed open, ready for the next clip.

STRENGTHS

- + Semi-automatic – far more firepower than the German bolt-action Kar98k
- + Powerful and accurate out to long range
- + Very tough and reliable in mud, rain and the cold of the Ardennes
- + Took a bayonet and could launch rifle grenades

SHORTCOMINGS

- Heavy – a lot of weight to jump with and carry all day
- Awkward to top up: a half-empty clip was hard to reload, so men often fired it off first
- Only 8 rounds before reloading
- Too long to jump with assembled; paratroopers had to pack it in pieces

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

- 1942–43 M1905 bayonet (16-inch blade) used in training.
- 1943–45 Shorter M1 bayonet (10-inch blade) introduced – lighter and handier.
- 1943–45 M7 grenade launcher: a tube clipped on the muzzle to fire rifle grenades, including the M9A1 anti-tank grenade. While fitted, the rifle fired only single shots.

IN THE FIELD

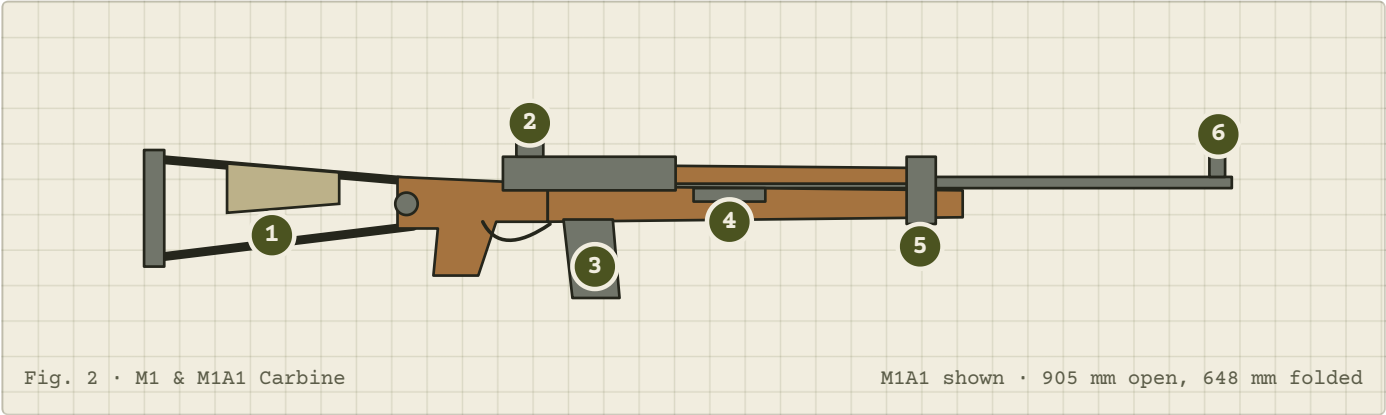
For the jumps into Normandy and Holland most riflemen packed their Garand, broken into three parts, in a padded canvas case (the “Griswold bag”) worn across the chest under the reserve parachute. Some men jumped with it assembled so they could fight the moment they landed.

RIFLES & CARBINES

M1 & M1A1 Carbine

The folding-stock paratrooper carbine

In use: M1: late 1942 – 1945 · M1A1: late 1943 – 1945



- 1

Folding wire stock (hinges at the grip)
- 2

Flip rear sight
- 3

15-round magazine
- 4

Operating slide & cocking handle
- 5

Barrel band & sling swivel
- 6

Front sight

CALIBRE .30 Carbine (7.62 × 33 mm)

ACTION Gas-operated, semi-automatic

MAGAZINE	15 rounds
WEIGHT	M1: 2.5 kg (5.4 lb) · M1A1: about 2.7 kg (6 lb)
LENGTH	905 mm (35.6 in); M1A1 folded 648 mm (25.5 in)
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 275 m (300 yd)
MUZZLE VELOCITY	about 600 m/s (1,990 ft/s)

A small, light rifle designed for soldiers whose main job wasn't shooting – officers, NCOs, radio operators, and machine-gun and mortar crews. The M1A1 was a special paratrooper version with a folding metal stock, so it could be jumped fully assembled and ready to fire. Many Easy Company leaders carried one.

STRENGTHS

- + Light and handy – half the weight of a Garand
- + M1A1 folds short enough to jump ready to fire
- + 15-round magazine, quick to change
- + Easy to shoot, little recoil

SHORTCOMINGS

- Weak cartridge – much less stopping power than the Garand, especially at range
- Men complained rounds failed to stop enemies in heavy winter clothing at Bastogne
- Wire stock was uncomfortable and could work loose
- Early carbines had no bayonet lug (added from 1944)

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1942 M1 carbine with fixed wooden stock enters service.

1943–44 M1A1 folding-stock paratrooper model issued to airborne units in England before D-Day.

1944–45 Bayonet lug and improved adjustable rear sight added to new production.

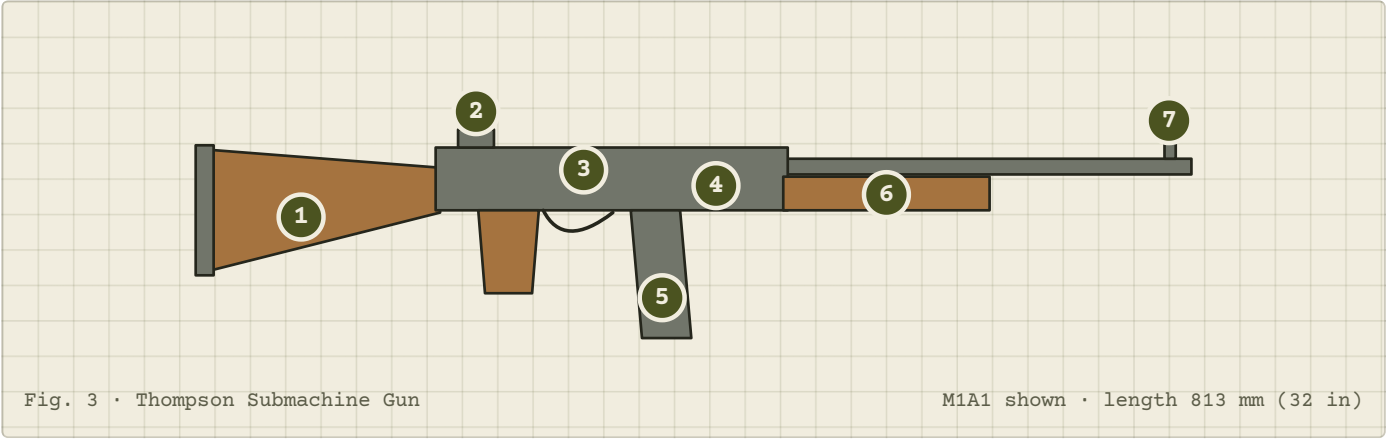
IN THE FIELD

Because the M1A1 could be jumped assembled, officers like platoon leaders often landed armed and ready, while riflemen had to dig their Garands out of padded bags first.

Thompson Submachine Gun

The “Tommy gun”

In use: M1928A1: 1942–43 · M1 / M1A1: 1943 – 1945



- 1

Detachable wooden butt stock
- 2

Fixed rear sight
- 3

Cocking handle (side)
- 4

Fire-selector & safety levers (left side)
- 5

20- or 30-round box magazine
- 6

Horizontal wooden fore-grip
- 7

Front sight

CALIBRE	.45 ACP (11.43 × 23 mm)
ACTION	Blowback, full- or semi-automatic
MAGAZINE	20 or 30 rounds (M1928A1 also 50-rd drum)
WEIGHT	4.8 kg (10.5 lb) empty
LENGTH	813 mm (32 in)
RATE OF FIRE	600–700 rounds a minute
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 50–100 m

A submachine gun firing the heavy .45 pistol cartridge in bursts. Squad leaders and scouts prized it for close fighting in Normandy’s hedgerows, Dutch villages and house-to-house combat. The early M1928A1 was a finely machined, expensive gun; the wartime M1 and M1A1 were simplified to speed up production, dropping the drum magazine, the finned barrel and the front pistol grip.

STRENGTHS

- + Huge firepower at short range
- + Heavy .45 bullet hit very hard
- + Reliable and solidly built
- + Ideal for clearing buildings and hedgerows

SHORTCOMINGS

- Heavy for its size, and its ammunition was heavy too
- Short range – useless much past 100 m

- Pistol ammunition, so it couldn't share rounds with rifles
- Expensive and slow to make (the reason the M3 replaced it)

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1942-43 M1928A1: vertical fore-grip, finned barrel, muzzle compensator, could use 50-round drum.
1943-45 M1 / M1A1: simpler and cheaper, horizontal fore-grip, box magazines only. The M1A1 has a fixed firing pin.

IN THE FIELD

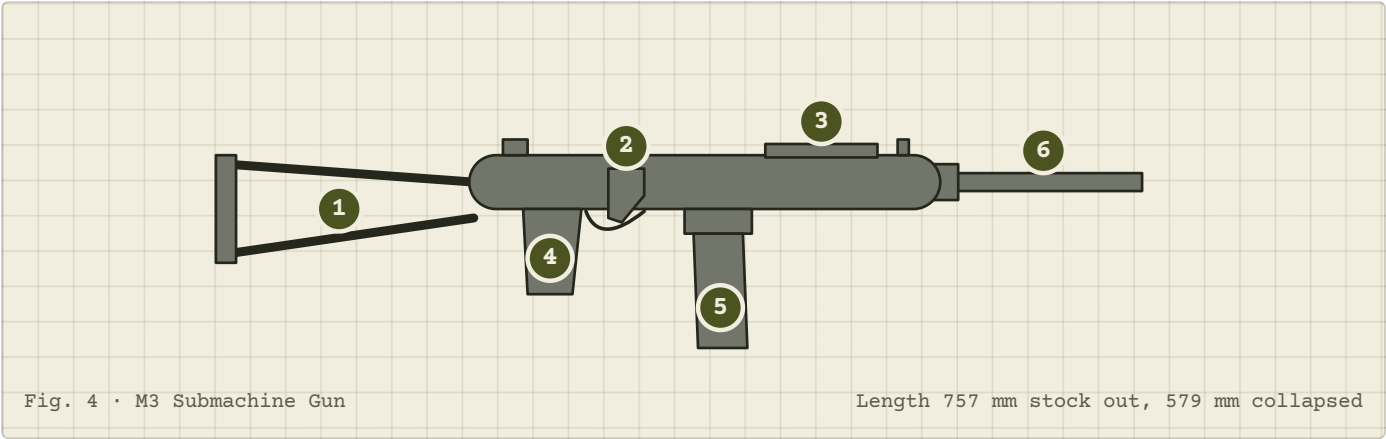
Paratroopers liked the Thompson but it was heavy to jump with. It often stayed with NCOs and men who had done well with it in training.

SUBMACHINE GUNS & PISTOL

M3 Submachine Gun

The “Grease Gun”

In use: Winter 1944 - 1945 • limited numbers



- 1 Sliding wire stock (also a cleaning rod)

4 Pistol grip & trigger
- 2 Cocking crank (right side)

5 30-round magazine
- 3 Hinged ejection-port cover – closing it is the safety

6 Barrel (unscrews for packing)

CALIBRE	.45 ACP (11.43 × 23 mm)
ACTION	Blowback, full-automatic only
MAGAZINE	30 rounds
WEIGHT	3.7 kg (8.2 lb) empty
LENGTH	757 mm (29.8 in) stock out
RATE OF FIRE	about 450 rounds a minute
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 50–90 m

A cheap, stamped-steel submachine gun designed to replace the costly Thompson. It looked like a mechanic’s grease gun, which gave it its nickname. The slow rate of fire made it easy to control, and the sliding wire stock made it compact. It reached airborne units in small numbers from the winter of 1944–45 and more in 1945.

STRENGTHS

- + Cheap and quick to make (about a fifth of a Thompson’s cost)
- + Slow rate of fire – easy to keep bursts on target
- + Lighter and more compact than the Thompson
- + Dust cover kept dirt out of the action

SHORTCOMINGS

- Looked and felt crude; many men preferred the Thompson
- Cocking crank could break
- No real safety except closing the port cover
- Magazines were hard to load and jammed if dirty

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

- 1943–44 M3 enters production; first reaches Europe during 1944.
- Dec 1944 Simplified M3A1 approved (cock with a finger in the bolt) – mostly arrived after the fighting ended.

IN THE FIELD

Men who received the grease gun in 1945 often traded or hung on to their Thompsons as long as they could – but the M3 would outlast the Thompson in US service by decades.

M1911A1 Pistol

The “Colt .45”

In use: Jul 1942 – May 1945 · the whole war

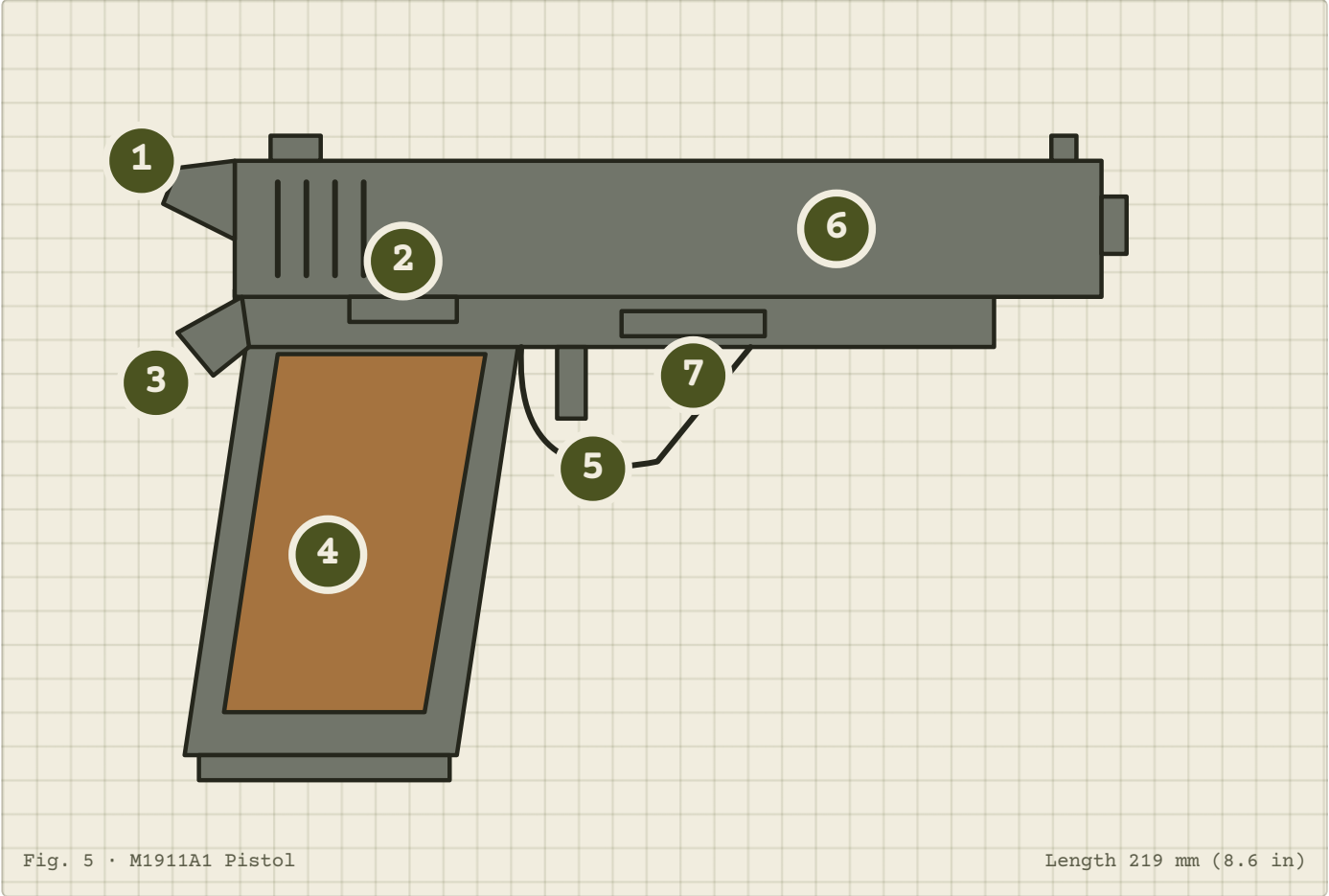


Fig. 5 · M1911A1 Pistol

Length 219 mm (8.6 in)

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 Hammer | 2 Thumb safety | 3 Grip safety |
| 4 7-round magazine in grip | 5 Trigger | 6 Slide |
| 7 Slide stop | | |

CALIBRE	.45 ACP (11.43 × 23 mm)
ACTION	Short recoil, semi-automatic
MAGAZINE	7 rounds
WEIGHT	1.1 kg (2.4 lb) empty
LENGTH	219 mm (8.6 in)
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 25–50 m

The standard US service pistol. Officially it was issued to officers, senior NCOs and crews of machine guns, mortars and bazookas, but paratroopers valued it so much that many enlisted men found ways to get one. It was the last line of defence – especially in the first minutes after a jump, before a man could assemble his rifle.

STRENGTHS

- + Powerful .45 round, very effective up close
- + Extremely reliable
- + A back-up weapon that could be used immediately after landing
- + Two safeties made it safe to carry

SHORTCOMINGS

- Hard to shoot accurately beyond short range
- Only 7 rounds
- Strong recoil, needs practice
- Heavy for a pistol

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1924-45 The M1911A1 (improved grip and sights over the 1911 of WWI) was the model used throughout the war.

IN THE FIELD

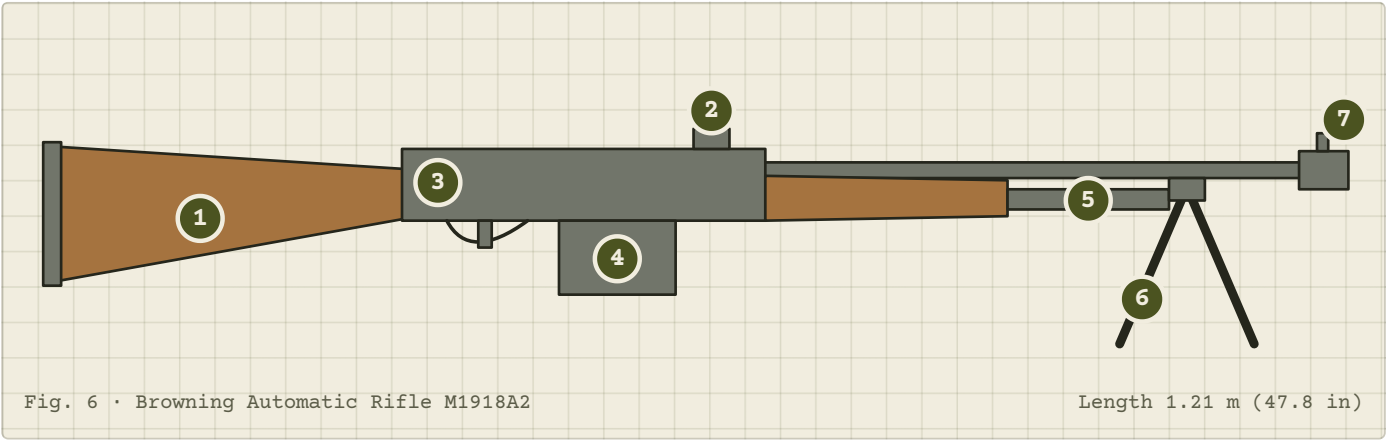
Paratroopers often carried the .45 in a leather holster on the pistol belt, and some tied the holster down to the thigh so it wouldn't flap during the jump.

AUTOMATIC RIFLE & MACHINE GUN

Browning Automatic Rifle M1918A2

The "BAR"

In use: Mainly from Holland, Sep 1944 - 1945 · picked up unofficially



- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Wooden butt stock | 2 | Rear sight | 3 | Selector: safe / slow / fast |
| 4 | 20-round magazine | 5 | Gas cylinder | 6 | Folding bipod |
| 7 | Flash hider | | | | |

CALIBRE	.30-06 Springfield (7.62 × 63 mm)
ACTION	Gas-operated, automatic (two rates)
MAGAZINE	20 rounds
WEIGHT	8.8 kg (19.4 lb) empty
LENGTH	1,214 mm (47.8 in)

RATE OF FIRE Slow 300–450 / fast 500–650 rounds a minute

EFFECTIVE RANGE about 550 m (600 yd)

A heavy automatic rifle that gave a squad its own machine-gun-like firepower. It was not part of the official 1944 equipment list for parachute rifle squads, but after Normandy paratroopers picked them up wherever they could, and from Holland onward BARs were a familiar sight in Easy Company's foxholes.

STRENGTHS

- + Automatic fire from the full-power .30-06 round
- + Accurate – could be fired from the shoulder or the bipod
- + Fired the same ammunition as the Garand
- + A single man could carry and fight with it

SHORTCOMINGS

- Very heavy, with heavy magazines
- Only 20 rounds per magazine – frequent reloads
- No quick-change barrel; overheated in long bursts
- Not designed to be jumped with

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1940–45 The M1918A2 (bipod, two rates of fire, flash hider) was the WWII model.

IN THE FIELD

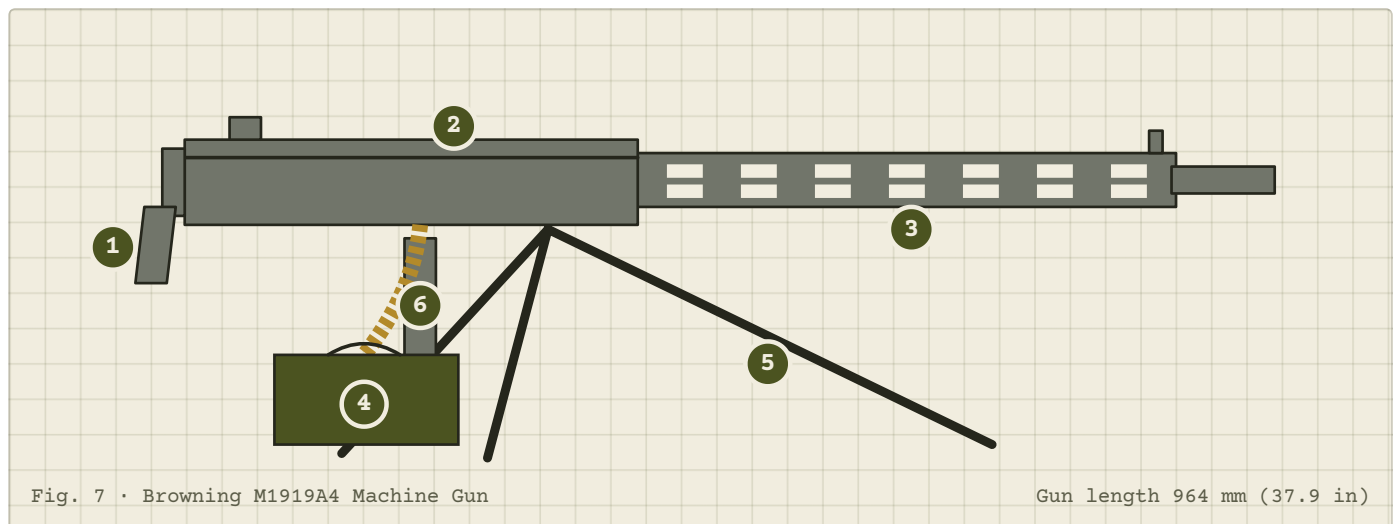
A BAR man usually had an assistant who carried extra magazines, since a gunner could burn through his own belt of 20-round magazines in minutes.

AUTOMATIC RIFLE & MACHINE GUN

Browning M1919A4 Machine Gun

The “.30 cal”

In use: M1919A4: 1942 – 1945 • M1919A6: early 1945



- 1 Pistol grip & trigger at the back plate
- 2 Top cover – belt feeds in from the left
- 3 Perforated barrel jacket (air cooling)
- 4 250-round belt in steel ammo can
- 5 M2 low tripod
- 6 Traversing & elevating mechanism

CALIBRE	.30-06 Springfield (7.62 × 63 mm)
ACTION	Recoil-operated, belt-fed, air-cooled
AMMUNITION	250-round cloth belt
WEIGHT	Gun 14 kg (31 lb) + tripod 6.4 kg (14 lb)
LENGTH	964 mm (37.9 in)
RATE OF FIRE	400–600 rounds a minute
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 1,000 m
CREW	2–4 (gunner, assistant, ammo bearers)

Each parachute rifle platoon had its own light machine guns, and they were the backbone of Easy Company's defence – most famously in the frozen foxhole line outside Foy during the siege of Bastogne. Fired from a low tripod, the gun could lay down steady, accurate fire across open ground. The later M1919A6 added a shoulder stock, bipod and carrying handle so it could be moved and fired more like a light machine gun.

STRENGTHS

- + Sustained, accurate fire from a stable tripod
- + Very reliable, even in the cold and mud
- + Same .30-06 ammunition as rifles and BAR
- + Stopped enemy attacks cold when well positioned

SHORTCOMINGS

- Heavy – gun, tripod and ammunition were split between several men
- Needed a tripod to fire properly (A4)
- Barrel heated up quickly in long bursts; slow to change
- Much slower rate of fire than the German MG42 (about 1,200 rpm)

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1942–45 M1919A4 on the M2 tripod – the standard gun.

1943–45 M1919A6: shoulder stock, bipod, carrying handle and flash hider added. Reached units in 1944–45; 14.7 kg (32.5 lb), heavier than hoped.

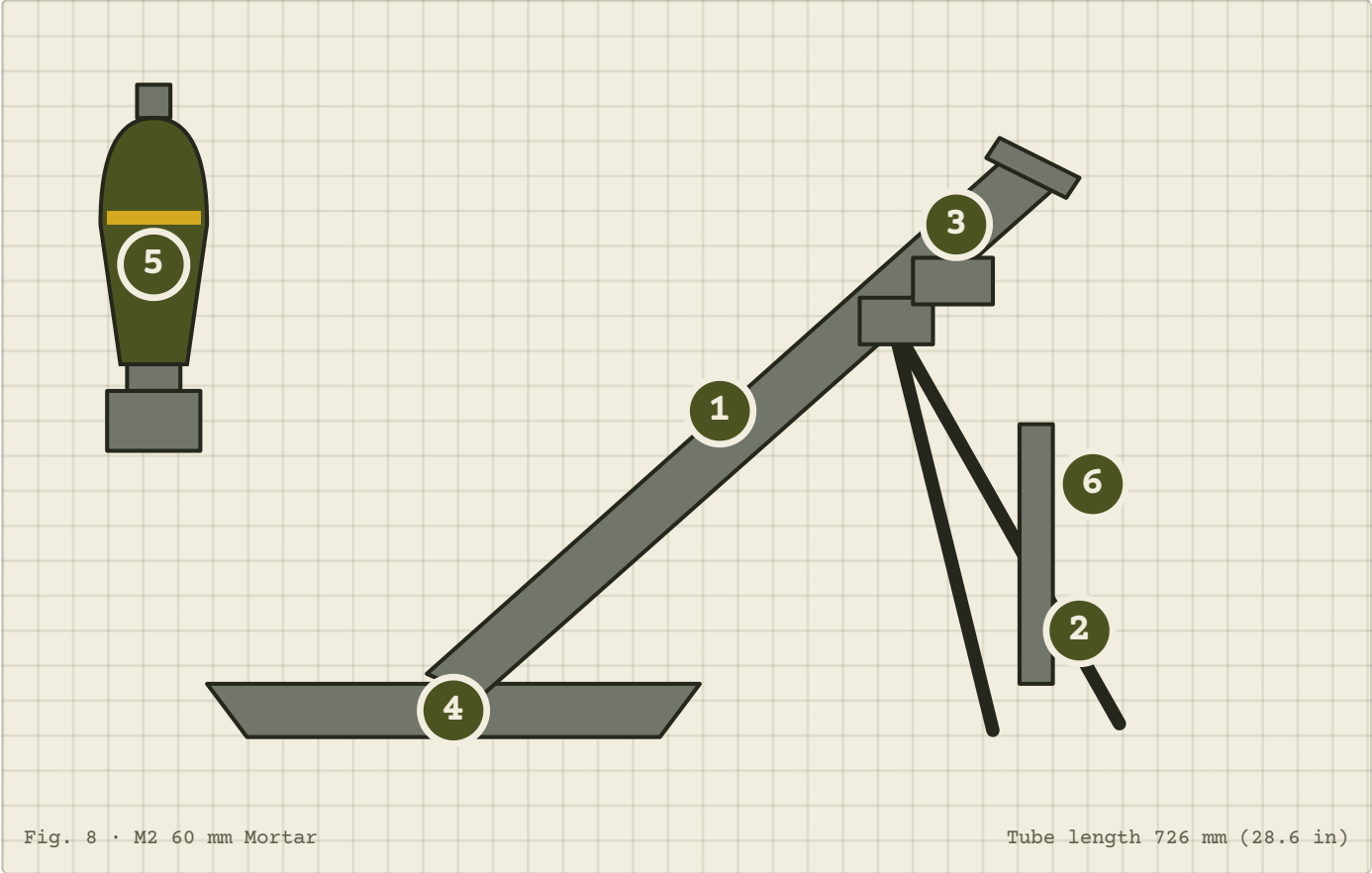
IN THE FIELD

For the jump, the gun and tripod were split up and packed in padded bags or equipment bundles dropped with the platoon, which is why so many guns went missing in Normandy's scattered drop.

M2 60 mm Mortar

The company's own artillery

In use: Jul 1942 - May 1945 · the whole war



- 1

Barrel (tube) – bomb dropped in the muzzle
- 2

Bipod
- 3

M4 sight
- 4

Baseplate
- 5

M49A2 high-explosive round
- 6

Elevating crank

CALIBRE	60 mm
WEIGHT	19 kg (42 lb) complete
RANGE	about 45 – 1,800 m with HE
RATE OF FIRE	18 rounds/min sustained, up to 30 for short bursts
ROUND	M49A2 HE, about 1.4 kg (3 lb)
CREW	3 in action (gunner, assistant, ammo bearer); more carried ammunition

A light mortar that gave Easy Company its own short-range artillery. The crew dropped a bomb down the tube; it slid onto a firing pin and was launched high into the air to fall on targets the men couldn't see directly – behind hedgerows, in woods or in trenches. It split into loads that the squad could carry, and could even be fired by hand without the bipod.

STRENGTHS

SHORTCOMINGS

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Hit targets behind cover that rifles couldn't reach+ Fast into action and quick to move+ Light enough for paratroopers to carry+ Fired smoke and illumination as well as high explosive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Needed huge amounts of heavy ammunition- Small bomb – limited effect against well-dug-in troops- Short range compared with the battalion's 81 mm mortars- Crew needed training to aim accurately |
|--|---|

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1944-45 New M83 illuminating round added to light up the battlefield at night.

IN THE FIELD

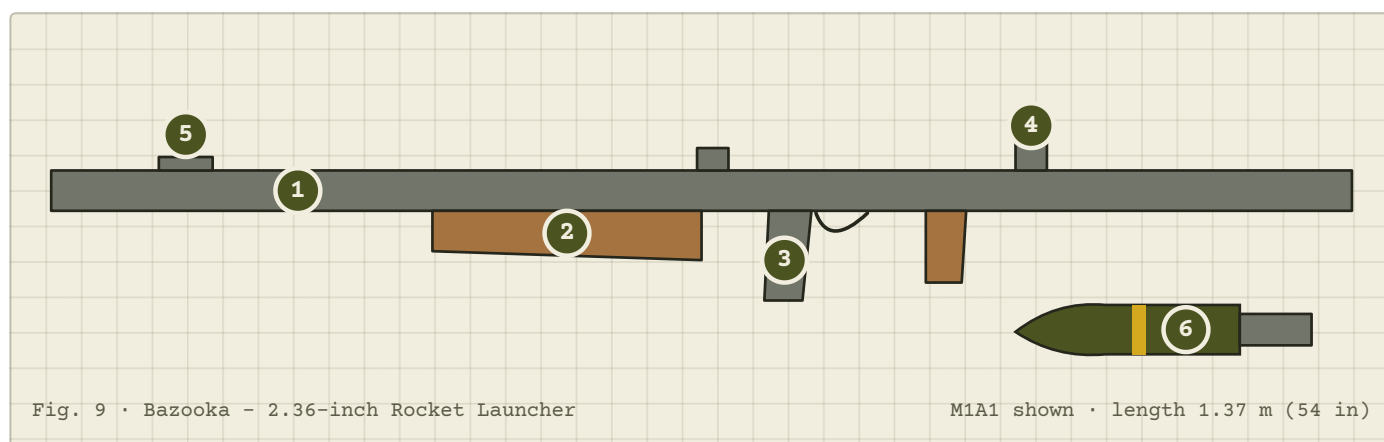
At Bastogne the mortar squads were short of ammunition for days until supplies were dropped by air on 23 December.

MORTAR & BAZOOKA

Bazooka – 2.36-inch Rocket Launcher

Named after a comedian's home-made trombone

In use: M1A1: 1943 - 1944 · M9 / M9A1: late 1944 - 1945



- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 Launch tube (open at both ends) | 2 Shoulder stock – batteries inside (M1A1) | 3 Pistol grip & trigger |
| 4 Front sight frame | 5 Rocket latch & contacts | 6 M6A3 anti-tank rocket |

CALIBRE	2.36 in (60 mm)
WEIGHT	M1A1 5.8 kg (12.8 lb) · M9A1 7.2 kg (15.9 lb)
LENGTH	M1A1 1,370 mm · M9A1 1,550 mm (splits in two)
ROCKET	M6A1 / M6A3 HEAT, about 1.6 kg (3.4 lb)
ARMOUR PENETRATION	about 80–100 mm
EFFECTIVE RANGE	about 100–140 m against tanks

A shoulder-fired rocket launcher that let an infantryman knock out a tank. The loader slid a rocket into the back of the tube and connected it; the gunner aimed and pulled the trigger, sending a shaped-charge rocket that could burn through armour. Paratroopers jumped without tanks or big guns, so the bazooka and the Gammon bomb were their main defence against German armour.

STRENGTHS

- + Gave infantry a real chance against tanks and half-tracks
- + Light enough for two men to carry and use
- + Also good against bunkers, machine-gun nests and buildings
- + Simple to aim and fire

SHORTCOMINGS

- Could not penetrate the front armour of Panther and Tiger tanks
- Gunner had to get dangerously close
- Huge back-blast and smoke gave away the firing position
- M1A1 batteries failed in wet and cold; long tube was awkward to jump with

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1943-44 M1A1: one-piece tube, battery firing. Used in Normandy and Holland.

1944 M6A3 rocket with rounded nose replaces the M6A1 – less likely to glance off.

Late 1944-45 M9 / M9A1: splits into two halves for jumping and carrying; a hand magneto replaced the batteries; better sights.

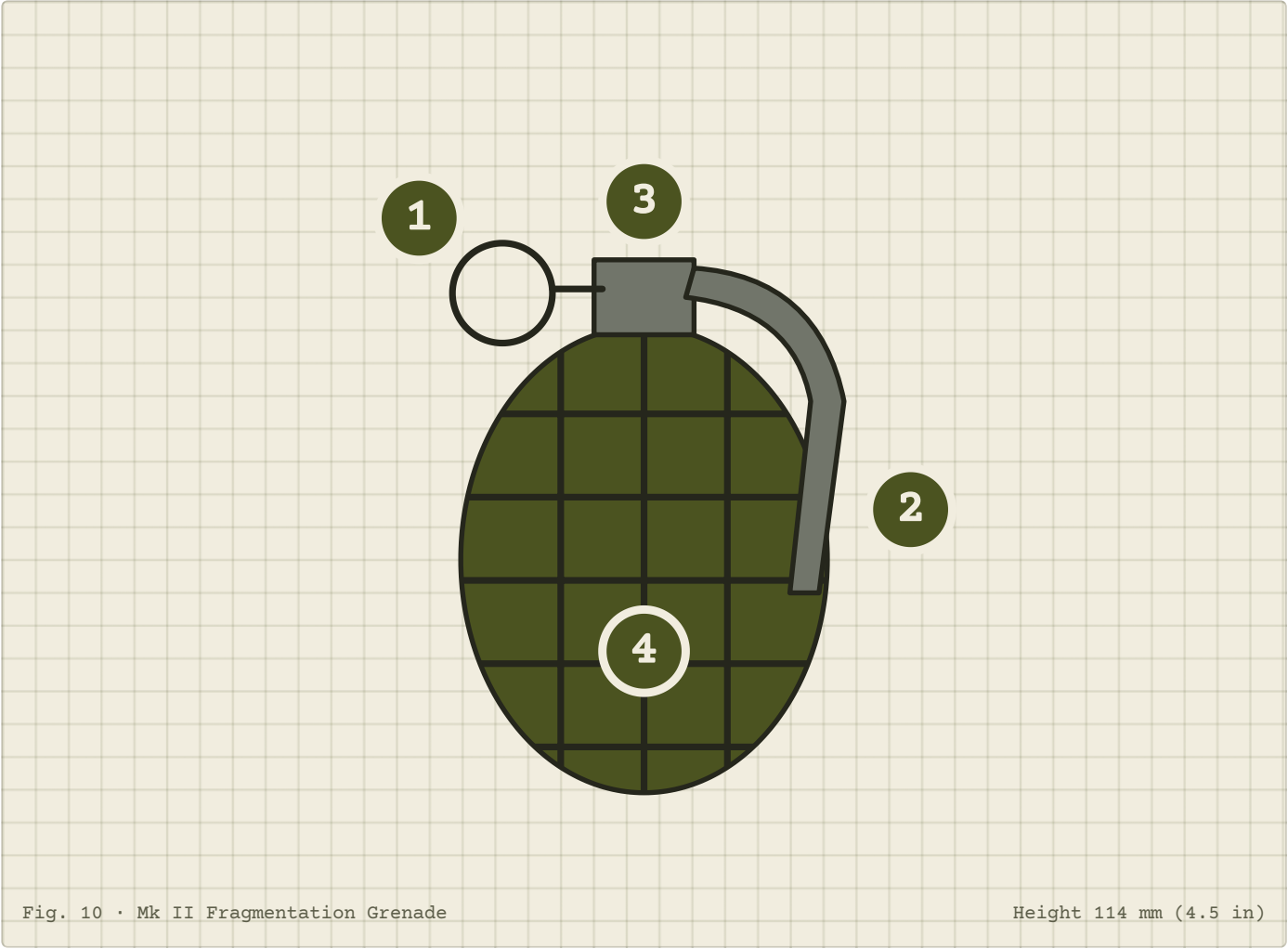
IN THE FIELD

In Holland, paratroopers faced German tanks with little more than bazookas and Gammon bombs, and learned to aim for the thinner side and rear armour.

Mk II Fragmentation Grenade

The “Pineapple”

In use: Jul 1942 - May 1945 · the whole war



- 1 Safety pin & pull ring
- 2 Safety lever (the “spoon”)
- 3 Fuze – 4 to 5 second delay
- 4 Cast-iron body filled with TNT

WEIGHT	about 595 g (1.3 lb)
FILLING	about 57 g (2 oz) TNT
FUZE	4–5 second delay (M10A3, then M204 from 1944)
THROWING RANGE	about 30–40 m
KILLING RADIUS	about 5–10 m; fragments could fly 45 m

The standard American hand grenade. The soldier held the safety lever against the body, pulled the pin, and threw. When the lever flew off, the fuze burned for four to five seconds before the grenade exploded, throwing out pieces of its iron body. Paratroopers carried as many as they could –

hanging from their webbing and stuffed into the big pockets of their jump jackets.

STRENGTHS

- + Reliable and simple to use
- + Excellent for clearing foxholes, trenches and rooms
- + Could also be fired from the Garand with an adapter
- + Easy to carry several

SHORTCOMINGS

- Despite the grooves, it didn't break into even fragments
- The fuze's pop and smoke could warn the enemy
- A long delay gave time to throw it back
- Heavy – most men couldn't throw it as far as a German stick grenade

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1944 New M204 fuze gave off no tell-tale smoke or sparks.

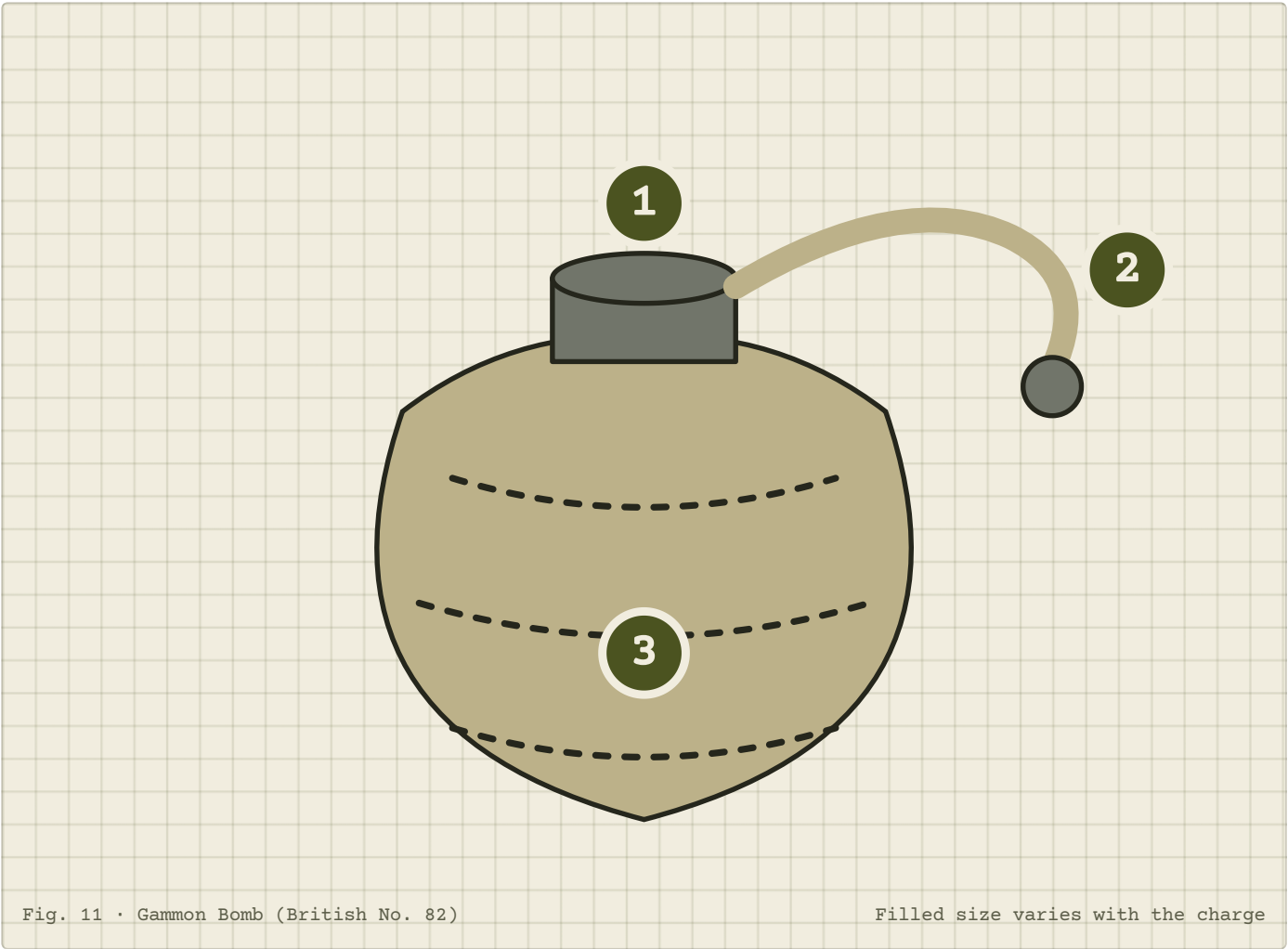
IN THE FIELD

Paratroopers taped down the safety levers so the grenades couldn't accidentally arm during the violent jolt of the parachute opening.

Gammon Bomb (British No. 82)

The paratrooper's favourite

In use: Jun 1944 - Nov 1944 · mainly Normandy & Holland



- 1 Screw cap over the impact fuze
- 2 Linen safety tape with lead weight
- 3 Stretchy cloth bag - soldier packs in plastic explosive

ORIGIN	British No. 82 grenade, issued to US airborne
FILLING	Plastic explosive, packed by the soldier - up to about 0.9 kg (2 lb)
FUZE	No. 247 "All-ways" - explodes on impact
THROWING RANGE	about 15-25 m
USE	Anti-personnel with a small charge, anti-vehicle with a full one

A British invention that American paratroopers adored. It was just a cloth bag with an impact fuze on top; the soldier filled it with as much plastic explosive as he wanted. A small handful made a powerful grenade; a full bag could blow the track off a tank or wreck a half-track. When thrown, the

tape unwound, the fuze armed, and the bomb went off the instant it hit anything.

STRENGTHS

- + Power could be adjusted for the target
- + Exploded on impact – no time for the enemy to react
- + One of the few ways a paratrooper could stop an armoured vehicle
- + Very light to carry before filling

SHORTCOMINGS

- Dangerous – once the cap was off, dropping it could set it off
- Short throw with a big blast: the thrower had to take cover
- Soldier had to assemble it himself
- Supplies of plastic explosive and bombs ran short later in the war

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1944 Issued in England for Normandy and Holland; seen less often after Bastogne.

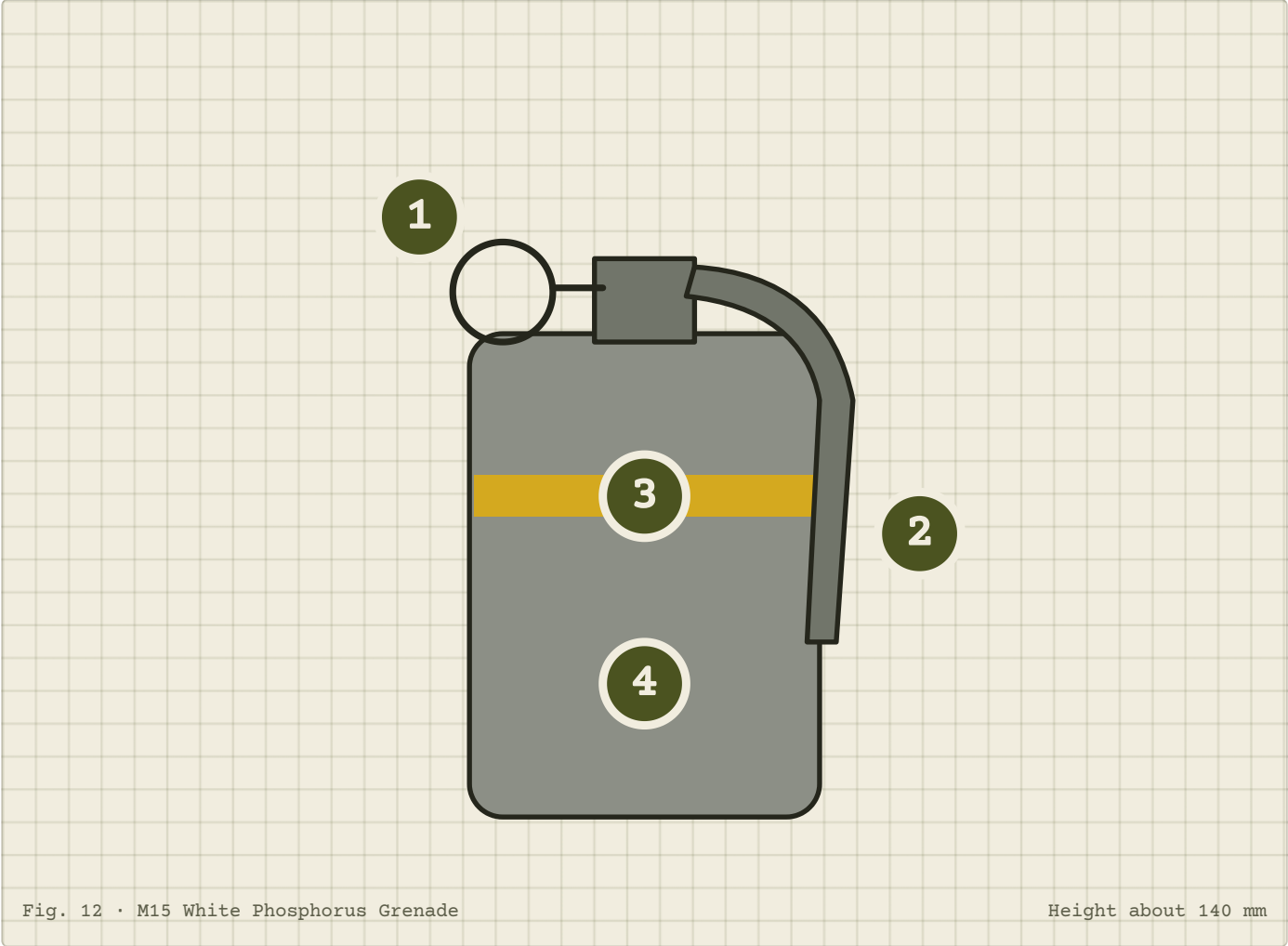
IN THE FIELD

Paratroopers carried Gammon bombs into Normandy specifically to fight German armour, since they would land far from any friendly tanks.

M15 White Phosphorus Grenade

“Willie Pete”

In use: 1943 – May 1945



- 1 Safety pin & pull ring
- 2 Safety lever
- 3 Yellow band marks white phosphorus
- 4 Thin metal body – bursts to spread burning phosphorus

WEIGHT	about 880 g (1.9 lb)
FILLING	about 425 g white phosphorus
FUZE	4–5 second delay
THROWING RANGE	about 30 m
BURST RADIUS	about 15–20 m
BURNS FOR	about 60 seconds

A grenade that burst into a cloud of thick white smoke and burning phosphorus. It was used to hide men while they moved, to mark targets,

and to drive enemy soldiers out of cover, since the burning particles set fire to whatever they touched.

STRENGTHS

- + Instant, thick smoke screen
- + Burning particles forced the enemy out of buildings and foxholes
- + Could set vehicles, houses and supplies on fire
- + Frightening effect on the enemy

SHORTCOMINGS

- Burst radius was bigger than many men could throw it – dangerous to the thrower
- Hot smoke rose quickly, so the screen didn't last long
- Heavier than the Mk II
- Burns were very serious and hard to treat

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1943–45 Issued alongside M18 coloured-smoke grenades, used for signalling aircraft and marking positions.

IN THE FIELD

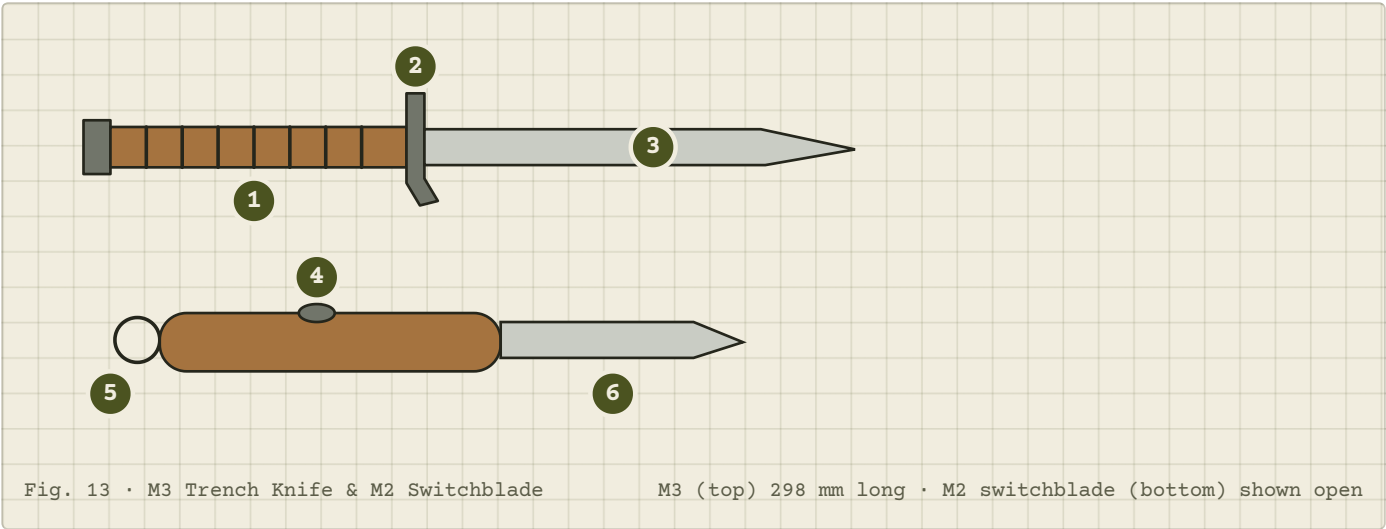
Men were trained to throw it from behind cover and never upwind, because the burning pieces could scatter back toward them.

KNIVES

M3 Trench Knife & M2 Switchblade

Every paratrooper's cutting tools

In use: M2 switchblade: 1942 - 1945 · M3 knife: 1943 - 1945



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 M3: leather-washer grip | 2 Crossguard | 3 M3: 6¾-inch (17 cm) blade |
| 4 M2: release button & safety | 5 Bail to tie the knife to the jacket | 6 M2: 3-inch blade – cuts parachute lines |

M3 TRENCH KNIFE	Blade 170 mm (6¾ in), overall 298 mm (11¾ in); leather sheath M6, then M8
M2 SWITCHBLADE	Button-release blade about 76 mm (3 in); carried in the jump jacket's zipped chest pocket

Two knives every paratrooper relied on. The M2 switchblade could be opened with one hand – vital if a man landed tangled in a tree or was being dragged by his parachute and needed to cut the lines. The M3 trench knife was a fighting and utility knife, usually worn strapped to the lower leg or jump boot.

STRENGTHS

- + M2 opened with one hand – could save a trapped man's life
- + M3 was strong, well balanced and useful for everything from digging to opening rations
- + Both light and easy to carry
- + M3 sheath strapped to the leg, out of the way of the parachute harness

SHORTCOMINGS

- M3 blade was a fighting design – not ideal as a work knife
- M2 blade was small and could close under pressure
- Leather grips and sheaths rotted in wet weather
- Knives were easily lost during the jump

CHANGES DURING THE WAR

1942 M2 switchblade issued with the M1942 jump uniform.

1943-45 M3 trench knife adopted, first issued to airborne and Ranger units; became the M4 bayonet in 1944 for carbines.

IN THE FIELD

The zipped chest pocket of the M1942 jump jacket was designed to hold the M2 switchblade, where a man could reach it while hanging in his harness.

Ammunition

Easy Company used only a handful of cartridges, which made resupply simpler: the rifle, BAR and machine gun all fired the same .30-06 round, and the pistol, Thompson and grease gun all fired .45.

ROUND	FIRED BY	TYPES USED	HOW IT WAS CARRIED	NOTES
.30-06 Springfield 7.62 × 63 mm	M1 Garand, BAR, M1919 machine gun	M2 Ball plain tip M2 Armour-piercing black tip M1 Tracer red tip M3 grenade blank crimped, no bullet	Garand: 8-round clips in a 10-pocket cartridge belt (80 rds) plus cloth bandoleers of 6 clips (48 rds). BAR: 20-round magazines in a 6-pocket belt. MG: 250-round cloth belts in steel M1 ammo cans.	A powerful, long-range round. Machine-gun belts usually mixed ball and tracer (often 4 : 1) so the gunner could see his aim.
.30 Carbine 7.62 × 33 mm	M1 / M1A1 carbine	M1 Ball	15-round magazines; a canvas pouch holding two slipped over the stock, more in belt pouches.	Light and easy to carry in quantity, but much weaker than .30-06 — roughly pistol-class power at long range.
.45 ACP 11.43 × 23 mm	M1911A1 pistol, Thompson, M3 grease gun	M1911 Ball (230-grain bullet)	Pistol: 7-round magazines, 2 per pouch. Thompson: 20- or 30-round box magazines in canvas pouches. M3: 30-round magazines.	Heavy, slow bullet with strong stopping power at close range; drops quickly past about 100 m.
60 mm mortar bomb	M2 mortar	M49A2 High Explosive M302 White Phosphorus (smoke) M83 Illuminating (1944–45)	Each round in a black cardboard tube; carried in canvas ammo bags and vests by every man in the mortar squad.	An HE round weighed about 1.4 kg (3 lb). Riflemen often carried a couple of extra rounds for the mortar squad.
2.36-inch rocket	Bazooka M1A1 / M9 / M9A1	M6A1 → M6A3 anti-tank (HEAT) M10 White Phosphorus	One rocket per cardboard tube, carried in bags by the loader and other men in the squad.	The M6A3 (1944) had a rounded nose so it didn't glance off sloped armour. Fired electrically; batteries in the M1A1, a hand magneto in the M9.
Hand grenades	Thrown, or fired from the M7 launcher	Mk II fragmentation M15 White Phosphorus M18 coloured smoke (signals) British No. 82 "Gammon"	Hooked by the lever to webbing and jacket pockets; paratroopers stuffed their big jump-jacket pockets with them.	Rifle grenades (M9A1 anti-tank, and Mk II with an adapter) were launched with the special M3 blank cartridge.

Drawings are simplified diagrams to show the main parts; they are not to exact scale. Figures are the standard US Army values for each model. Where a weapon was used unofficially or in small numbers, that is shown in the timeline.

‡ HONOR THEM

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In the summer of 1942, thousands of young volunteers – farm boys, clerks, kids barely out of school – stepped off the train at Camp Toccoa, Georgia, and started running up Currahee. Three miles up. Three miles down. The ones who refused to quit became Easy Company.

Two years later they jumped into the dark over Normandy. They held the line in the frozen woods at Bastogne. Many of them never came home, and the rest are gone now. But the camp where it all began is still standing, kept alive by volunteers.

This guide will always be free. If it helped you stand where they stood, please give something back to the place that made them. Camp Toccoa at Currahee says 100% of donations go to restoring the camp – and \$75 puts an engraved brick beside the C-47 they are restoring in the paratroopers' honor.

‡ DONATE TO CAMP TOCCOA

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