

## *Captain George William Simonds*

*Copied from a publication entitled "...by the Greatness of his life"*

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George William Simonds, of San Jose, California, A.B. Stanford 1938, took his first quarter's work in law at the Stanford Law School in the autumn of 1939 and left in good standing at the end of the quarter. Entering the army in August 1941, he rose from the ranks to be commissioned as second lieutenant May 25, 1942. Desiring field duty, he sought attachment to a parachute unit, and was assigned to the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, at Camp Mackall, North Carolina, where he served in 1942 and 1943. Among his papers during this period is his request of May 12, 1943, to be relieved of staff duty to field duty with the same regiment, which request bears the endorsement of Major Mendez, commanding his battalion, reading in part: "An excellent officer. Desire to hold him within this Battalion." By this time he had become a first lieutenant.

He went with his unit to Ireland in December 1943. A letter from him, written when in England, May 2, 1944, tells of his delight in the beauties of the English countryside and of a visit to a cathedral. "Now I know what Hulme was talking about. It is unbelievable," he says.

On D-Day, Simonds, then a captain, and his company literally hit Normandy. A fellow captain, Chet Graham, in an intensely interesting letter directed to Captain Simonds' brother, Mr. Charles Simonds, of Alma, California, tells of the arrival in Normandy as follows (referring to Captain Simonds as "Bill"):

Bill came in to France in a C-47 which overshot our drop zone and dropped his load at the beach. Bill was hung up in a tree there and killed a man with his carbine while hanging in the tree. He cut himself loose and injured his foot. He was troubled by that foot all the rest of his time. The stick assembled and moved to Chef du Pont which was taken from the Germans on D plus One. Bill and 40 men held the town against attack across the Merderet River by one battalion of the Germans for two days. Then other troops got there and helped out.

The letter then describes the constant fighting of the following days, culminating in the attack on Hill 95 on July 4, which cost the life of Captain Simonds. A moving fellow-soldier tribute to Captain Simonds is added. The letter reads in part:

We attacked on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July and took Hill 131, the highest ground in the vicinity. We had a lot of casualties that day -- we fought a rough bunch of Germans. That night we were moved to another area to help the unit on our left, cleared the area and settled down to sleep when they woke us up for the plans for 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We had to attack Hill 95 overlooking La Haye du Puits -- a quarter of a mile from the town that the Germans said was as strongly defended as Caen. And the hill was the key to the defense. We moved across the open area -- two miles of movement under German observation. When we arrived there it was about twelve noon. We were under considerable 88mm fire and some mortar fire. Company D went around the left side of the hill. Bill was with the center unit

which traveled up a deep ditch. A mortar shell got a direct hit ten feet from Bill. Several men were injured by this shell, including your brother and the platoon leader. I was about 100 feet away at this time and a runner was sent to me to tell me that Captain Simonds was hit. He was hit pretty badly in the back. I asked him how he was. He said that he was all right and that he would make out all right -- for me to go on -- that he would see me when he got out of the hospital. He refused to let the aid man who was there to work on him until he took care of the platoon leader saying that Lieutenant Hamilton was hit worse than he was. I sent a man for stretchers and left Bill. When I returned in a half hour he was dead. Bill was a strong man, intelligent and able. He had ideals and he lived by them. And he was a hell of a fine man -- and my best friend. I have missed him as I can miss no other man. We were very close. He spoke of you often -- I know a lot of his memories of you. Bill had planned to do a lot of things with you after this was over. He is now buried in the Monarch Cemetery three kilometers southeast of Sainte Mere Eglise. I wish to God that your brother and my friend was alive today. We will never forget Bill. His "Aye, me son" is his and no one says it now. But his "San Anton" is murmured often over glasses that drink a toast to Smiley Simonds.

A letter from The Adjutant General to Captain Simonds' mother, Mrs. Gertrude J. Gale, of San Jose, reads as follows:

My Dear Mrs. Gale:

I have the honor to inform you that, by direction of the President, the Silver Star has been posthumously awarded to your son, Captain George W. Simonds, Infantry. The citation is as follows:

### **SILVER STAR**

"For gallantry in action in ....., France, on 4 July 1944."

This award will be forwarded to the Commanding General, North Service Command, Fort Douglas, Utah, who will select an officer to make the presentation.

Captain Simonds' unit, the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, received a Presidential Citation for action during and after the invasion.