

(for SHAMF, public relations, ministry of information, Malet Street London).

For United Press

JUNE 7, 1944

Werner dateline with an advance ninth airforce unit in France stop
eye hit the shores of France ~~about four and one half~~ about four and one half
hours after the initial assault troops had landed and eye had an
immediate and sound initiation in airstrike warfare stop eye left the
LGT boat some distance from shore, along with men bers of a ninth
airforce engineering unit who were transported on it, and waded in water
almost ~~hip deep~~ hip deep stop before ~~that~~ we had left our ship they said
it "looks rough up ahead," but eye had expected that stop but what eye
hadnt expected was the terrific concentration of mortar fire so
~~mmmm~~ encountered stop eye quickly learned the ~~mm~~ art of diving into
the nearest foxhole stop when their wasn't a foxhole handy eye found myself
down on my stomach ~~of the sea with my hands and feet over the shells~~
would come over o
we would stick ou
stop the mortar s
position well beh
warning because o
a little dog in u
we heard them com
his bayonet and e
there for keeps b
the rest stop no

The

STORY BY
CHRIS BLOSE



D-Day Dispatch

**DOUG WERNER STORMED UTAH BEACH ON D-DAY, THE DAY THE TIDE
TURNED FOR THE ALLIES IN WORLD WAR II. CLUTCHING A TYPEWRITER
INSTEAD OF A GUN, HE SERVED WITH WORDS, NOT WEAPONS.**



ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 6, 1944, 10 years to the day after he graduated from MU, Merle McDougald "Doug" Werner was on a boat headed for Normandy, France. He was not alone, of course. It was the start of D-Day, probably the most storied day in U.S. military history. Werner was there to tell the stories.

Werner, BJ '34, was a war correspondent for United Press stationed in London. His editor, the now-famous Walter Cronkite, DL '70, had offered him one of only 20 slots reserved for reporters and photographers near the front line of the invasion. A colleague had warned him of the great danger, but Werner had seen an ulterior motive behind the concern — trying to get him to drop out and leave the slot open. This was a choice assignment, and his colleague wanted it as much as he did.

Now he was on a boat in the English Channel headed for Utah Beach. He had

been at sea since the night of June 4 because weather had delayed the invasion. Soldiers were seasick, shelling was beginning, and Navy guns were rumbling nearby.

As men began getting off the boats to wade to shore, he knew that he could turn back any time he wanted to. As a reporter, he had more of a choice in being there than the soldiers around him who were following orders. In fact, another correspondent had injured his shoulder upon arrival and hopped back into the boat to head back to England.

Werner, a journalist since high school, wasn't going to miss this story, though. Not one this big. He would witness firsthand and write about other big stories later in his career: the liberation of Paris, the Nuremberg trials, the communist occupation of Czechoslovakia, and so on. And in his second career for the Foreign Service, he would be a press attaché in such hot spots as the spy-ridden Stockholm when Stalin died, Vienna during the Hungarian revolution and Korea when North Korea attacked the USS *Pueblo*.

But D-Day would be the biggest of the big stories and the hottest of the hot spots. This kind of work was why he had become a war correspondent after being

In the D-Day dispatch Werner wrote from a foxhole at Utah Beach, top left, he used "cable-ese," a code that provided clarity in such communication. For example, cable-ese substituted "eye" for "I" to avoid confusion with the number "1." Famed photographer Robert Capa took this photo, left, of a soldier wading to shore at Omaha Beach, where Allied casualties were heaviest.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DOUG WERNER FAMILY/THE NEWSFILM

Doug Werner, above, also reported from the trials at Nuremberg.

A Newsman's Tribute

Famed newsman Walter Cronkite, who worked as Doug Werner's editor at United Press and recommended him for the D-Day assignment, wrote the following tribute for Werner's memorial service:

We have lost another of that small band of brothers who were the United Press staff that covered World War II in Europe. Doug and I worked out of the London bureau covering the air war through the many months before the action moved to the continent after D-Day, an event he covered with courage that won the admiration of the soldiers he accompanied ashore.

I had the opportunity to work most closely with Doug when together we covered the trial of the Nazi leaders at Nuremberg. I always had great respect for his reporting and writing but when I watched him under deadline pressure competing with the best AP could throw against us, I knew he was among the greats — and he did it all with such good humor that he was everybody's favorite — competitors and Unipressers alike.

Our Maker turned out few like Doug. We shall miss him.

rejected by the Army because of poor eyesight. Now he was wading ashore in hip-deep water with an extra pair of eyeglasses in his vest pocket, lest he lose his first pair and become practically blind.

He was escorted for protection by Capt. Haynes Thompson, who would become a lifelong friend after this experience. The men around Werner held guns. He held a portable Hermes typewriter, clutched to his chest so it wouldn't get wet.

Unarmed, he arrived on shore. He dove into foxholes to avoid bullets and artillery fire. When there were no foxholes, he dug them with his hands and feet. Sometimes having to step over bodies, he worked his way slowly along the beach along with the soldiers.

Eventually, he found a safe foxhole and started typing. In his dispatch, he described the assault from mortar shells: "We would always have a brief warning because of their peculiar whine — some-

thing that sounded like a little dog in distress. We flopped down in nothing flat every time we heard them coming."

He also described the slow progress along the beach: "We were nearly an hour moving down a stretch of sand less than a mile long but it was an hour which other men agreed was an hour of horror. That was particularly true of men who were new at this sort of thing like myself."

He went on to write about the mixture of chocolate bar and sand he had for lunch and the excellent cup of coffee he drank with his supper. Despite any lighter moments, that artillery fire stayed with him.

He ended his dispatch with this: "Jerry was still pestering us with mortar fire so dusk came Thompson and myself dug a deep comfortable foxhole and lined it with grass and put boughs over the top of it. It wasn't quite as luxurious as the Savoy but it seemed a

real haven for us. We couldn't get over the thought of that mortar fire on the beach. Shells seemed to whine in our ears all the time, even after we fell asleep."

A courier came to take the finished dispatch from the beach to London the next morning so that United Press could distribute it to newspapers. Because the army had not let him fight, he had come to this beach to tell a story. He had done that. It wasn't his first story, and it wouldn't be his last, but it was going to be his most memorable. ☼

Author's note: Doug Werner died at age 91 in his home in Falls Church, Va., on May 19, 2004, just 18 days before the 60th anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2004. His widow, Dorothy Werner, maintains a collection of his papers and contributed information for this article.

Other MU alumni served as war correspondents during World War II, including Hal Boyley, BA, BJ '32; Wright Bryan, Journ '27; William Higginbotham, BJ '35; and Pierre Huss, Arts '29.