

John Thompson

In the landing operation on Sicily, John Thompson of the Chicago *Tribune* took the most hazardous press job available, became the only newspaper casualty in the actual landing—but his story appeared first on the pages of another paper! Recently, he was decorated with the Purple Heart by Maj. Gen. Mathew B. Ridgway for the injury he suffered.

Thompson was an old hand at Army parachute jumping, so when news came to the press corps prior to the Sicilian invasion that there would be paratroop activity, he was the natural one to cover that phase of the operations. In North Africa he had become the first American reporter to make a combat jump with the paratroopers at Algiers.

So when the huge transport planes lifted into the sky from North Africa and headed toward the Sicilian shore, John Thompson sat in one of them with his parachute rigging in place. When the planes belched forth their human cargo over the Italian island, he was one of the black specks floating lifted into the sky from North Africa

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and headed toward the Sicilian shore, John Thompson sat in one of them with his parachute rigging in place. When the planes belched forth their human cargo over the Italian island, he was one of the black specks floating slowly toward earth. Thompson wrenched his knee when he hit the ground that day, but it did not prevent him from writing a vivid first-hand account of the first major U. S. paratroop action of the war.

Later, back in Chicago, the public read that first dispatch in the *Chicago Daily News* before they read it in the *Tribune*. What had happened in North Africa to make that possible was a practice known as "pooling the news." Since Thompson was the logical person to go on the parachute part of the trip, he agreed to cover it for two other Chicago papers, as well as for his own paper. In return the correspondents from those papers agreed to cover the ground and sea aspects of the landing, which Thompson would miss while in the air.

