

Newsweek

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R.I.P. in Normandy

The first American cemetery on French soil for the dead of this war is at Cardonville, on Cherbourg Peninsula. In the years to come many American women will visit this cemetery as they visited those of the last war. The following cable from Al Newman, a NEWSWEEK war correspondent, tells what it is like now.

The women will come ashore on the long docks of the Gare Maritime at Cherbourg. By that time all the port installations will be repaired and the tall central tower will have risen again and the long-shoremen will chant the strange French songs which end nowhere. The train will huff its way out of the deep gash of a valley to the south toward Valognes and some of them may notice frowning Fort du Roule and ask how they could have taken it. Perhaps some of them will cry. They may have to change trains at Carentan, and at Isigny they will have to take a bus. From there to that field near Cardonville it is not far. It is a huge field where cattle used to graze, bordered by tall trees which bow in the Channel breezes and, during the rare periods when the sun comes out, larks sing in the adjoining meadows.

One day these acres of simple stakes will be acres of crosses and the raw, brown earth between them will know grass and flowers and women's tears. The bravest guys in the world—the dead of our bloodiest D-Day beach—will slumber here under the flag.

Grave No. 2: This is United States territory forever. You would know, of course, that in Grave No. 1 lies a kid from the Bronx. One dog tag of the two which dangle around all our necks to remind us that we live with death is wired

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neatly through a hole in the stake. The other is on its way now—on its way home. Nobody here knows how the kid from the Bronx got it. A machine-gun, shell, a grenade—what does it matter now?

They bury them fast and neat: 6½ feet long, 2 feet wide, 5 feet deep, 2 foot separation. The graves are as similar as the dead were dissimilar in life. Colonels lie next to buck privates for in the grave as beyond it there is no distinction of rank. Yet by Army regulation there is a 100-yard no man's land between the German section and the Yanks. In death as in life they shall be parted. In the days when the wives and mothers come to this field many things will be forgotten: the scene in the next meadow where the dead are carefully identified. The afternoon when a soldier bringing in a corpse found his brother's body there. The long rows of still forms shrouded in blood-stained mattress covers. The strangely sprawled-out feet, which are the unfailing mark of the dead. (When you wonder whether a soldier by the roadside is asleep forever or will awaken to more war his feet will tell you.) The shock of seeing a German lad's hair rumpled by the wind and the momentary illusion that he is alive again. The services for the dead at 4 o'clock each afternoon.

Somebody Has To: The mayor of this city of the dead is Lt. A. F. Pierson, a big, handsome guy who used to work for International Business Machines in New York. He curses the day when he studied surveying, for that's what got him his present job: "Somebody's got to do it, but I'd rather be fighting with my armored outfit. Not that we don't get shot at too when we're out collecting bodies. But I never get time to eat. I live on concentrated chocolate and coffee. I'd like to talk some more, but you must excuse me now. It's low tide and we've got to recover the body of an American aviator. It's tangled with the underwater defenses down on part of the beach where they haven't cleared the mines."