

Truscott's Rangers



First Ranger: Maj. Robert Rogers

Mention in last week's communiqués of a detachment of a "United States Ranger battalion" that had taken part in the Dieppe raid was the first disclosure of the existence of these Commando-type American troops. Afterward, correspondents in London were able to fill in the details.

All Rangers are volunteers, they reported. The first, selected for strength and ability to use such weapons as daggers, grenades, fists, tommy guns, and mortars, began training months ago alongside British, Canadian, and Fighting French units. They went through a supertoughening process that was described by Rice Yahner of the Associated Press: "The men drilled at double time until their feet blistered and their lungs were bursting. When their legs were ready to fold, they started again . . . Then they got climbing and diving and crawling over obstacles and crossing a bridge made of the 7-foot ropes which each man carries . . . Then a 36-mile hike over bleak trackless mountains with only half rations and what the men could forage from the countryside."

Probably less than 100 Rangers took part in the Dieppe foray, although many times that number are in training. How it felt and what they did were tersely described by one of them, Sgt. Kenneth D. Stempson of Russell, Minn.: "Dieppe was hotter than hell. My group of twelve was assigned to knock out a coastal battery. The battery was knocked out. Five of our men returned."

This was brisk talk, worthy of a brand-new fighting force that paradoxically came into being with a tough tradition. For the Rangers were named after Rogers's Rangers, the rough and crafty Indian fighters of colonial days who battled near the Canadian border under their leader, Maj. Robert Rogers, known to the Indians as *Wobi madaondo*, or white devil. (His roistering adventures formed the subject of Kenneth Roberts' recent novel, "Northwest Passage.") The *Wobi madaondo* who led the new Rangers into action last week was Brig. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott Jr., 47-year-old, squared-jawed Texan with a reputation as one of the Army's best cavalry commanders and polo players. According to Army friends, Truscott is as "hard as hell, drives his men, but outdoes the best of them."