



The Overlord Report

Issue 46

The Newsletter of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation

Winter 2018

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The National D-Day Memorial exists to build bridges: from the present to the past, from appreciative Americans to honored veterans, from awed visitors to heroes who gave their all on the beaches of Normandy.

We also get to build bridges across the Atlantic each fall, as we welcome students from the Institut St. Lô in Normandy. St. Lô, of course, was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting after D-Day, as American forces struggled to breakout from the hedgerow territory. These students know some of the story; they visit Virginia (as a part of the Roanoke Valley Sister Cities program) to learn even more about the war—events which happened long before they were born, but which profoundly shaped their lives.

On October 17, 2017, 26 students from Institut St. Lô toured the National D-Day Memorial. Like their counterparts who visit from American schools, they learned about the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of Allied forces on June 6, 1944, discovering how the average American soldier on D-Day trained, what sort of equipment they carried, and about the costs of the invasion for our community of Bedford, Virginia.

But the real treat for the students was a visit with an actual D-Day veteran, Bill Sisk of Lynchburg. He related his experiences and recollections of D-Day, and answered questions from the eager students. Their session bridged several gaps: cultural, generational, national—yet both Mr. Sisk and the students felt an obvious connection.

The French people, especially those around Normandy, have never forgotten the forces of Operation Overlord who came to liberate their homeland and defeat Nazi Germany in 1944. The students from St. Lô are carrying that appreciation into the next generation, so that what happened on D-Day—and what victory ultimately cost—never fades from consciousness. We are honored to be part of building these bridges. Your continued support makes visits like these possible. Each year countless teachers ►►



Top photo: Students from Institut St. Lô in Normandy

Bottom photo: D-Day veteran Bill Sisk sharing his story



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and students embark upon a historical journey. With each passing year we lose more and more D-Day veterans, yet we are so grateful to allow students like those of St. Lô a chance to speak with them while they still can. Thank you and our wonderful veterans for making this all possible!

LUMINARY EVENT A SUCCESS THANKS TO DONORS!

More than 500 people visited the Flames of Memory event December 8--9 in spite of the extremely cold temperatures. Inclement weather led to the cancellation of the third night, however a record-breaking 200 tributes were received this year.

Exactly 4,413 "Flames" were placed throughout the Memorial with each one representing the number of Allied fatalities suffered on June 6, 1944. The stirring tribute brought out new crowds as well as those who have made the viewing an annual tradition. Andrew Dowd, a 13 year old from Bedford, has visited the Memorial during the luminary event for several years. This year he reflected on what each light truly represented. "It is very moving to know that every one of those candles represents a life. These were sons and they had their own lives. Maybe they played soccer or baseball, yet they all died fighting for our country on that one day." He took time to consider how each "flame" represented the significant sacrifice made on June 6, 1944 so future generations, such as himself, would enjoy the freedoms we have today.

Luminaries can be purchased throughout the year in honor or memory of anyone, D-Day veteran or otherwise.

The Foundation is particularly grateful to Moose Lodges across Virginia for being the primary sponsor of this event and we are equally appreciative to everyone who gave toward this meaningful initiative.



VETERAN BRICK CAMPAIGN

Orders are currently being taken for veterans' bricks to be part of the 2018 Veterans Day dedication. The inscribed bricks are a permanent tribute to the men and women who have served. These lasting tributes are not limited to service in World War II and can encompass any service period. Currently the Memorial has placed over 800 inscribed bricks on site, each one a moving testament to the service others have given to our country. Placed prominently on the Memorial grounds, they will be viewed by thousands of visitors each year. The placement of each brick is not only an investment in the legacy of a loved one but also an investment in the future of the Memorial. Proceeds from the brick campaign will assist the Foundation in maintaining the Memorial for many years to come. At a cost of \$250 each, the bricks are an affordable way to give permanent veteran recognition at the National D-Day Memorial. Though the deadline for a Memorial Day dedication has passed, the deadline for a Veterans Day dedication is not until September 1st. Please call our office today at (800) 351-DDAY or visit our website for more information www.dday.org.



ENHANCING OUR SITE

for Veterans and Visitors

Throughout the year the Memorial sees thousands of visitors from all over the country. Staff and volunteers work diligently to ensure our site is always pristine, from the upkeep of the landscaping and the pressure washing of walls to the cleaning of plaques and sculptures. As the winter season concludes and the spring season commences, we are hard at work in enhancing the site to make your visit to the Memorial more enjoyable.

You have been so generous in the past and we cannot thank you enough for your generosity! Some exciting new initiatives include beginning preliminary work on our walking trail enhancements, a fresh coat of paint in many areas, and adapting our current storage building to house improved kennels for visiting pets. The enhanced walking trail, which may open as early as the Fall of 2018, will also provide an outdoor area for walking pets as well as additional space for visitors to simply enjoy with the scenic backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance. We look forward to sharing the results of each of these initiatives with you in the coming months. Thank you for being a part of them. If you would like to donate to any of these projects directly, please contact our office at (800) 351-DDAY or email us at dday@dday.org.

LEAVING YOUR LEGACY

As a donor to the National D-Day Memorial, you are making it possible to preserve the lessons and legacy of D-Day. Each day students, veterans, family members, and visitors learn about the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of our D-Day and WWII veterans because of you. **You have made this a priority because of your giving.**

Your continued support through a legacy gift will ensure we never forget the incredible courage and sacrifice of our veterans.

You can leave a legacy that will ensure their stories live on.

A charitable gift in your estate plan is a great way to create a lasting legacy. There are a number of legacy giving options that may be ideal for you. These include giving through your estate, charitable gift annuities, trusts, life insurance gifts, and real estate, just to name a few. Please consider leaving your legacy – our future generations will benefit from your generosity today.

Our Director of Development, Brandon Gregory, would be happy to talk with you about your legacy giving options. Please feel free to give him a call at (540) 586-3329 or email at bgregory@dday.org. If you have already planned to leave a gift in your estate, we'd love to hear about it!



ARTIFACT HIGHLIGHT:

The Minary Collection

For 337 days from D-Day to the German surrender, the Allies fought intensive battles on the ground and in the air. But alongside the combat on the battlefields, another war was being fought: one of ideas and persuasion, of propaganda and counter-propaganda. It was the campaign of the Psychological Warfare Division (PWD), and an important archive in the collection of the National D-Day Memorial tells the compelling story.

In 2015, the heirs of Lt. Colonel John Minary donated a collection of leaflets, broadsides, maps and other artifacts to the Memorial, items he had collected during his wartime service. Minary served in the PWD from 1942 to 1945, eventually receiving a Bronze Star for his service. The most notable portion of his collection are so-called “paper bullets,” propaganda leaflets dropped by the millions behind enemy lines, for the purpose of convincing individual German soldiers (or even entire units) to realize the war was lost and to peaceably surrender. There are over 300 such leaflets in the Minary Collection,



Lt. Colonel John Minary

mostly in German but with a few in Italian, Polish and Russian. While Allied shells and bullets diminished the enemy’s ability to fight, these leaflets steadily eroded their will to fight. Words, believed the soldiers of the PWD, were also weapons.

The Minary Collection is only a fraction of the thousands of objects, documents, and photographs in the collection of the National D-Day Memorial, but it is an important component. Through such historical items, we get a glimpse into the past and an opportunity to preserve the lessons of WWII for the future. Thanks to you, compelling stories like these will live on and be told for years to come.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

On Friday, May 25th, the Jefferson Choral Society will perform a stirring concert that will have guests on their feet celebrating the freedoms so many have fought and died to protect. During this year’s concert, the Memorial will recognize high school seniors who have made the decision to enter the U.S. military. “These young people have committed to serving our country and they

should be recognized for their willingness and desire to give back through selfless service to our nation,” said Foundation President, April Cheek-Messier. “The concert is a powerful reminder that the torch of liberty is being passed to another generation and that we should be ever mindful of the sacrifices of those who came before us.” Tickets go on sale in April. ►►

On Monday, May 28th at 11 am, our special Memorial Day ceremony will officially recognize the men and women who have sacrificed for our freedoms. Our keynote speaker will be Brigadier General John “Jack” W. Mountcastle, former Chief of Military History for the Army, a veteran of Vietnam, and former professor at the U.S. Military

Academy at West Point. Special music provided by Brass 5. During our ceremony, the latest installation of veterans bricks will be dedicated. Admission will be free until noon and guests are encouraged to bring their own chair. For more information call our office at (800) 351-DDAY or visit our website, www.dday.org.

VETERANS DAY 2017

The air was chilly but spirits were high as we gathered on November 11 to mark Veterans Day. Hundreds of patriotic participants gathered in the Elmon T. Gray Plaza at the National D-Day Memorial to pay tribute to Americans who have served in uniform to defend our rights and guarantee our security.

In addition to saying thank you to veterans, we took the opportunity to pay tribute to an often-overlooked group: United States Marines in the European Theater in WWII. With the help of two general officers of the USMC, we unveiled a new narrative plaque recognizing the role of the

Marines in the European Theater, and the Normandy Invasion in particular. Our own faithful supporter Dan Villarial led the charge to get this plaque funded, and was duly recognized for his dedication to the cause. Semper Fi, Dan!



Faithful supporter, Dan Villarial, next to the new USMC in the European Theater in WWII plaque



(Above) Veterans during the 2017 Veterans Day commemoration ceremony

(Below) Students from the Boonsboro Elementary School choir thanking veterans for their service



During the service, another faithful supporter was recognized for his service to the National D-Day Memorial, a man who profoundly shaped who we are and what we do. Former President Dr. William McIntosh was recognized for his years of tireless work in leading the organization through very difficult times. Dr. McIntosh may be retired now, but his legacy lives on every time we open the gates.

Amidst the other activities, we also dedicated 66 commemorative bricks to veterans. Many family members of those so honored joined us to pay heartfelt tribute.

Thanks to all of those who made Veteran's Day possible, including our indispensable volunteers, the cadets of the AJROTC from Pittsylvania and Bedford Counties, the inspiring children's choir from Boonsboro Elementary school, reenactor Jim Callear, and of course our sponsors for the event Fostek, the Bedford Area Welcome Center and Tourism Department, English Meadows, and Bank of the James.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Jerry Yellin



The staff, board, and volunteers of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation mourn the loss of our beloved friend and ardent supporter Captain Jerry Yellin.

Last year on June 6, Capt. Yellin delivered the keynote address at the Memorial's commemoration of the 73rd anniversary of D-Day. One of the nation's best-known World War II veterans, Yellin shared his harrowing story of having flown the final combat mission of WWII, in which his wingman, Phil Schlamborg, became the final American to die in battle during the war.

Moved by his visit in June, Yellin became further involved with the Memorial and its mission. In September, he raised the flag to open the National D-Day Memorial Golf Classic and played as a celebrity guest golfer. One of Yellin's final interviews was recorded at the National D-Day Memorial in October, as he joined the Memorial's upcoming capital campaign as Honorary Chair.

"We gave our lives in World War II so that we can have freedom, freedom for our country and freedom in the world," said Yellin. "Every American should come and see this memorial, to see what we did in my generation so that your generation could live as free Americans. We fought for freedom, but we live for peace."

Though famous for his role in the war, Yellin often said he was just one of more than 16 million young Americans willing to fight for freedom in WWII. Yellin's message and dedication to his fellow veterans will live on through his books, speeches, and interviews.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of Jerry Yellin. He was not only a dear friend but a tireless advocate for veterans who believed in educating our youth about the lessons and legacy of WWII," said April Cheek-Messier, Foundation President. "He loved the National D-Day Memorial and was working diligently with us as Co-Chair of our capital campaign to build the future education center. He will be remembered as the hero he was, and honored for the inspiring message he imparted to all. Fly high Jerry. We will miss you."

PAVILION QUONSET HUT UPDATE

As we work to expand educational elements of the National D-Day Memorial, each structure continues to tell the story. This is true with the recent addition of a period style Quonset hut (Q-hut) which houses the new gift shop, restrooms and office area. Because of your fantastic support, the Memorial's newest planned addition will become a reality. At the end of 2017, many donors gave generously to provide the funds needed to both remove the old trailer gift shop and begin construction on a second Q-hut.

Your generosity will provide visitors an opportunity to reflect on the Memorial as they share a meal ►►

with friends and family. Perhaps even more crucial, it will add an area for educational programs, school tour lunches, military reunions, presentations with veterans, a picnic area for Honor Flight groups, lecture space, an enclosed area for winter programming, and much more.

Befitting the style of the time, and the story we tell, the addition of this new Q-hut, along with the recent addition of the gift store Q-hut, will allow this area to mimic a military installation in Plymouth, England, similar to where many of the troops were stationed prior to the Normandy Invasion. The National D-Day Memorial Foundation remains committed to every area of the monument representing a part of the overall story with each element serving as a teaching tool for visitors and students to learn more.

Your support has helped and continues to help educate students and visitors on what life was like for the troops prior to D-Day.

Thank you for preserving their legacy. Because of your support of this project, we will be able to better accommodate veterans (of all eras) and their families while expanding educational opportunities for students and visitors into the future.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Dick Elder

Faithful volunteers at the National D-Day Memorial find a connection to the story we tell. But few feel the connection as deeply as Richard Elder, a tour guide who personalizes each tour with a compelling biographical element.

Dick Elder is the son of a D-Day veteran, a father he never knew. Captain Ned Elder served with the 743rd Tank Battalion on Omaha Beach, a unit which got some of the few tanks on shore that fateful day. The heroes of the 743rd would receive no less than nine Distinguished Service Crosses for their service. Captain Elder would give his life on July 11 outside of St. Lô. The son he never saw was only five months old.

Fast forward several decades. Dick Elder heard about a Lunchbox Lecture at the National D-Day Memorial in which veterans would tell their stories of the Normandy Invasion and decided to attend. He found the stories captivating, and left convinced that he had to assist the Memorial in keeping that history alive. “It’s kind of a calling to be here,” Dick ▶▶

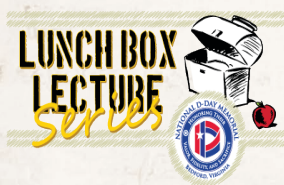


said recently.

For more than a decade now Dick has guided tours, interweaving into the history of D-Day the story of his own father, one of the first Americans to land on Omaha Beach. He most enjoys the tours in which visitors also share that personal connection, telling him about a grandfather or an uncle who was also part of Operation Overlord. "We HAVE to keep telling the story," Dick maintains.

In April things will come full circle, as Dick shares the compelling story of the 743rd during our Lunchbox Lecture. In the meantime, he'll keep giving tours and seeing that visitors know the story of D-Day and what so many gave to ensure freedom for the world.

2018 LUNCHBOX LECTURE SERIES



The National D-Day Memorial is pleased to announce its 2018 Lunchbox Lecture series. These illuminating talks on various aspects of World War II history are held at the Bedford Area Welcome Center (816 Burks Hill Rd, Bedford, VA) beginning at noon. The talks are free and open to the public. Guests are welcome to bring a lunch to enjoy during the programs.

Feb. 22nd: Josephine Baker: "The Black Pearl" in the French Resistance with April Cheek-Messier, Foundation President

Josephine Baker became an unlikely spy for the French Resistance in WWII. Growing up poor in the streets of St. Louis, Missouri and struggling to survive in an American society plagued with racism, Baker eventually left the United States and became a cabaret sensation in Paris. Here, she offered her services as a spy, noting to the head of the French Intelligence Service, "The people of Paris have given me everything. They have given me their hearts, and I have given them mine. I am ready to give them my life." During her time in the resistance, she collected invaluable information on German troop movements while hiding war refugees in her home. After the war, Baker received the Croix de Guerre and the Medal of Resistance. This fascinating talk by president April Cheek-Messier is presented in celebration of Black History Month.

March 22nd: Yellow & Orange: How Women Resisted and Survived the Holocaust with Tim Hensley, Director of Collections, Virginia Holocaust Museum

The Virginia Holocaust Museum contains over 200 separate accounts of survivors who settled in the Commonwealth after World War II. Using the experiences of four women who came to Virginia, we will discuss the obstacles each faced in different parts of Europe trying to survive the Nazis' attempt to eradicate European Jewry. Each of their stories contributes to what we know about the Holocaust, and what we must remember.

April 26th: The Heroic 743rd with Richard Elder, National D-Day Memorial Volunteer

Richard Elder, a volunteer at the Memorial and the son of a D-Day veteran, will speak on his father's unit, the 743rd Tank Battalion, and its vital contribution to victory in Europe. His deeply personal talk will highlight the formation and training of the 743rd, the development of amphibious Sherman tanks and the less-than-stellar record they had on D-Day, his father's death in combat near St. Lo, and the unit's fight through the hedgerows and on to victory.

For more information about the National D-Day Memorial's 2018 Lunchbox Lectures, call (800) 351-DDAY or visit www.dday.org.



THE NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

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