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## SONS OF D-DAY

In April, when Memorial tour guide Dick Elder presented a “Lunchbox Lecture” on the 743rd Tank Battalion and the father he never knew, little did he know that in two short months he’d be meeting another son of the 743rd.

Albert Mark, from Georgia, had planned to visit the Memorial one Friday afternoon in June, when a severe storm forced Memorial staff to close the site for visitor safety. Albert kept on driving to Pennsylvania to visit a WWII veteran. On his return trip the following week, he was able to finally take in that Memorial tour led by tour guide Twila Ross.

While on the tour, Twila mentioned the role of amphibious tanks on D-Day, landing immediately ahead of the Bedford Boys on Omaha Beach. Albert shared that he was the son of a 743rd soldier who landed in one of those tanks, and Twila told Albert of fellow tour guide, Dick Elder.

“Twila connected the dots,” said Dick. “Our dads both served in the same unit.”

Dick’s father in Company C, Albert’s in Company A.

“She said a man gave a presentation here. His name is Dick Elder,” said Albert. “I thought, Ned Elder. He was company commander.”

By the time his only son was born in February 1944, Capt. Ned Elder, Dick’s father, was already in England preparing for his role leading Company C of the 743rd on D-Day. On June 6, 1944, after witnessing the devastation of the tank battalion ahead of them, where only 3 of the 32 tanks in the 741st made it safely to the beach, Capt. Elder and a lieutenant made the joint decision to disregard orders and proceed directly to the beach. The result, all 32 tanks of the 743rd landed successfully on Omaha Beach.

**“There are whole families out there today that would be non-existent if it hadn’t been for his father, including mine,” said Albert.**

Albert has spent much of the last four decades researching and locating the men who served in the 743rd, even attending reunions at a farm in Minnesota owned by 743rd veteran Howard Froberg. Albert was familiar with Capt. Elder’s story, because Froberg thought so much of Capt. Elder’s leadership that he named his son Ned. A touching story Albert shared with Dick when Memorial staff arranged for the two sons of the 743rd to meet at the Memorial the day following Albert’s tour.

“That’s a big deal,” said Dick.

Their meeting included a phone call to Howard Froberg’s daughter Nora. Strangely enough, Dick Elder took a job in Minneapolis in 1968, living within an hour’s drive of the Froberg family and his late father’s namesake for more than three years, yet never knowing about the connection until the chance meeting with Albert 50 years later.

“I knew my father had something to do with D-Day, but I didn’t know what at that ▶▶



*Dick Elder greets Albert Mark in front of the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument.*



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point,” said Dick.

Capt. Elder would receive the Distinguished Service Cross for his efforts on D-Day, refusing to be evacuated despite being wounded, continuing to command his company. Capt. Edler was killed in action on July 11, 1944, while fighting in the hedgerows in Normandy. He’s laid to rest at Normandy American Cemetery. Dick has traveled there to visit his hero father’s grave.

“He never saw me. I never saw him,” said Elder.

When Dick Elder relocated to Central Virginia about eight years ago, it was his late father’s involvement in D-Day that inspired him to get involved as a Memorial volunteer. Since meeting Albert, he’s been in contact

with three other descendants of men who served with his father.

“We’re basically becoming a 743rd family,” said Albert.

A “family” that’s helping connect Dick with a father he never got to know and a history any son would be proud of.

Through your generosity, this chance meeting was made possible. Thank you for connecting these sons of D-Day!

## WWII DAY CAMP:

### Fun with a Serious Purpose

How many plastic soldiers could you drop into a Higgins Boat made out of cardboard and duct tape before it sinks to the bottom?

Thanks to your support, this is just one of many questions in this summer’s WWII Day Camp (answer: as many as 30!). The popular camp, held at the Memorial each summer, has drawn students from several states to learn about life in and the significance of the war. The theme for 2018 was Transportation, and kids discovered how planes, ships, tanks and trucks helped the Allies win the war.



Day Camp Week starts off with a one-day camp for Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade students. They learned about WWII transportation from two of our biggest artifacts: a 1943 Dodge Carryall truck and L-3 Grasshopper reconnaissance plane. They even had the chance to meet and ask questions of Memorial volunteer Bob Vandelinde, a decorated paratrooper from the Korean War.

The rest of the week was given over to the older kids—grades 3 through 6—for more in depth lessons and hands-on experiences. Divided into three companies—air, sea and land—the campers learned about paratroopers, landing craft, WWII GI rations, and the famed “Red Ball Express.”

Finally, the campers were challenged to think outside the box—literally—by designing their own WWII vehicle from re-purposed cardboard. The results may not have won any war, but they certainly showed some inspired thinking on the part of inspired students.



“Day Camp piques the kids’ curiosity about life during the war, while developing respect for what the Greatest Generation endured,” noted Associate Director of Programming and Events Maggie ►►



Mitchell, who planned the Camps. “Watching the campers go from a slight interest to wanting to learn even more about WWII and D-Day is the best part. That’s what it’s all about — the next generation preserving the stories of these great men and women.”

While everyone had loads of fun, the purpose was more than entertainment. The mission of the National D-Day Memorial is seeing that the legacy and lessons of World War II are not forgotten. Through your support, Day Camp is only one way we carry this vital mission to the next generation!



## 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 those who served.

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

A charitable gift in your will is a great way to create a lasting legacy. There are a number of other legacy giving options, as well, that may be ideal for you. These include 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

[bgregory@dday.org](mailto:bgregory@dday.org). If you have already planned to leave a gift in your will, we’d love to hear about it!



## 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

On June 6, 2019 the National D-Day Memorial will commemorate the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of those who fought to free the world of tyranny nearly 75 years ago.

The 75th anniversary commemoration ceremony begins the morning of Thursday, June 6 with an aerial tribute featuring WWII era-planes flying over the Memorial, the same aircraft that flew over Normandy 75 years prior. The largest gathering of D-Day veterans in the Nation is expected to attend the ceremony that day with every D-Day veteran in attendance being introduced in a special roll call.

The multi-day event continues Friday, June 7 with an outdoor, evening concert and canteen. The concert will feature a military band and chorus, among others.

A 1940s themed parade featuring veterans, antique cars, bands, and living historians will make its way through downtown Bedford on Saturday, June 8. Visitors can also enjoy walking tours of “Bedford Boys” sites. An authentic WWII field chapel service will conclude events Sunday morning, June 9.

Make plans now to be in Bedford, VA for this truly once in a lifetime commemoration. Check the Memorial’s website this fall for a complete listing of commemoration events.



# D-DAY INSPIRATION:

## Newest Board Member Encourages Others Through His Own Experiences

On June 6, 2016, the National D-Day Memorial hosted a moving ceremony for then Colonel Lapthre Flora who was promoted to Brigadier General. A native of Saigon, Flora became the first Vietnamese boat person to be promoted to general officer in the United States Army and the second of Vietnamese descent. Two years later this past June, the National D-Day Memorial Foundation welcomed BG Flora as one of its newest members to the Board of Directors.

BG Flora's life is one of survival and perseverance. Born in South Vietnam in 1962, his father was killed when he was just 2 years old. At that time, his mother was left a widow with six children. When he was 11, he worked in a factory loading trucks or mopping floors to help his family.

Following the Communist capture of Saigon in 1975, Flora and his brothers fled the city to avoid being drafted into the North Vietnamese military and to escape the indoctrination of communist principals initiated by the Hanoi government of Vietnam. They spent more than three years in the jungle surviving on snakes, rats, porcupines, monkeys, and vegetation that they themselves grew to stay alive. Days and nights were spent with an ever-watchful eye on government troops who might discover them. Eventually, Flora found passage on a boat he hoped would carry him away to a refugee camp. He boarded it with a brother and sister for what was an unknown destination.

Overcrowded conditions on these boats led to thousands dying at sea. With no food, little water, and stifling heat, the journey was extraordinarily perilous. Many of the boats succumbed to rough waters (as most were fishing boats not made for the open sea.) Others became the target of pirates and many refugees simply succumbed to sickness, disease, and starvation.

Fortunately for Flora and his family, they reached an Indonesian island where he spent a year living in refugee camps, after which he legally entered the United States. He was adopted by John and Audrey Flora of Roanoke, Virginia. Though he initially spoke no English, Flora worked hard through high school and later graduated from Virginia Military Institute.

Flora's adoptive father was a D-DAY veteran. Ironically, Flora found out when he came home and

announced that he had joined the National Guard's 29th Division, 116th Infantry, in Roanoke. At that time, his father sat down with Flora and shared his own experiences - that he was a retired major who had landed on Omaha beach on D-Day as part of the 116th.

This news made a profound impact on Flora and was one of the reasons he chose to have his promotion ceremony at the Memorial in 2016.



During his promotion ceremony, Flora noted,

It seems like just yesterday that I had arrived in this country as a traumatized and penniless Vietnamese 'boat refugee' who spoke not a single word of English. But what I had then and still have, to this day, is an enormous sense of gratitude and desire to give back to America for her priceless gift of freedom and a second chance in life. There are no words in any language that can adequately describe the euphoric moment I felt when we landed in the USA. And thus, Ladies and gentlemen, without a doubt, this is heaven on earth..."

Flora has served in three overseas deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan and in August was promoted to Assistant Adjutant General of the Virginia National Guard.

Flora has spoken to many groups over the years in hopes of inspiring others and is profoundly grateful for his time in the military and the ability to serve. The National D-Day Memorial Foundation is honored to have him as its newest member to the board of directors.

General Flora will be the keynote speaker on Veterans Day at the Memorial. The ceremony takes place on Monday, November 12th at 11am.



# KILROY WAS HERE WILL SOON BE HERE

For many years, the National D-Day Memorial has participated in the Virginia World War II Heritage Alliance, a consortium of museums in the Commonwealth which share the mission of remembering the Greatest Generation. Soon a new program will kick off to encourage visitation to the National D-Day Memorial and seven other sites, with incentives to keep learning more.



Dubbed “Operation Kilroy,” after the iconic World War II graffiti that went everywhere, this new program begins with a passport, picked up for free at any of the participating sites or downloaded from the Alliance website ([www.wwiiheritagealliance.org](http://www.wwiiheritagealliance.org)). Then, kids or entire families can take their passports to four of the sites, collecting stamps in the passport. When they visit the fourth museum, wherever that may be, they can redeem their passport for a prize. In addition, the travelling exhibit “Profiles of Honor” curated by the state World War I/World War II Commemoration Commission is

participating, giving Kilroy fans another destination to visit.

“Kilroy is going to be a great program, especially for kids” said Director of Education John Long. “When a kid leaves the Memorial with a passport, they’ll be ready to go explore more history at other places. We expect a great response.”

Besides the National D-Day Memorial, participating sites include the Stonewall Brigade Museum in Verona, the Virginia War Memorial and Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond, and the MacArthur Memorial, Hampton Roads Naval Museum, and Military Aviation Museum all in Tidewater.

Funding for Operation Kilroy is provided in part by the Virginia Tourism Corporation.



## BECOME A MEMBER!



If you find the National D-Day Memorial and the story it tells meaningful, please consider becoming a member of the Overlord Society. The Overlord Society serves as the membership program for the Memorial and by joining, you can show your support for the Memorial’s mission; recognizing the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied forces who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

The many levels available to choose from include benefits such as admission and tours, a discount at the Memorial store, and exclusive member items.

We are grateful for all our members, and we hope you will consider joining the Overlord Society. You can make a significant impact on the research, educational initiatives, and other work being accomplished at the National D-Day Memorial. Please visit [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org) for more information or call (800) 351-DDAY.



# DONOR CONNECTION

## Heroes Among Us



*Bobbie Johnson helped cut the ribbon on the new Bobbie G. Johnson Pavilion on Memorial Day.*

As we looked back on a busy spring, we had to marvel at two key events that embodied a spirit of service and continued sacrifice that seemed more pronounced than we have witnessed in the past.

Memorial Day and June 6 are always special events, marked by a solemn reminder of how much was lost to secure our freedoms today. Yet this year seemed to be marked by something else – a spirit of pure selflessness from two people who have already given back in ways innumerable and in ways that have changed and continue to change lives.

Bobbie Johnson and Ash Rothlein do not know one another. They are from different backgrounds, grew up in different places, have far different hobbies and likes, yet they share one key bond that has shaped their lives in profound ways since they were young men; they

joined, trained, and served in WWII to fight tyranny on a scale no one had ever seen before. They risked their lives to save others. They gave up their youth to protect a country and its future. They sacrificed time away from home and family. They lost friends along the way.

### **And, they never forgot it.**

Bobbie and Ash both went on to live extraordinarily successful lives and they could have stopped long ago, knowing they had given enough – but they didn't, and they haven't. Like so many of the WWII generation, they seem compelled – driven even - to give back as much as they can.

On Memorial Day, Bobbie stood proud as he cut the ribbon to the Memorial's latest addition, the Bobbie G. Johnson Pavilion which has allowed the Memorial to expand its everyday offerings and enhance visitors' experiences at the Memorial. The pavilion has already allowed us to host Honor Flights and veteran's reunions. The area is large enough to accommodate our veterans, with enough room to feed and entertain, as well. In fact, this past April marked the first Honor Flight in the new pavilion and with ample space, veterans were warmly welcomed with open arms, entertainment, lunch, and plenty of old fashioned hugs and tears of gratitude.

Several weeks later, the pavilion enabled the education staff to host large school groups, scout events, family day and WWII day campers. It has simply transformed the Memorial's ability to educate and commemorate the war for all ages.

Ash, on the other hand, had different ideas. He and his wife Liz envisioned giving back by providing a helping hand to students, so they could continue their education after high school. The Ash and Liz Rothlein Spirit of D-Day scholarship fund provides annual scholarships to deserving students who have shown an interest in community service and giving back by helping others. Through their vision for the future, students will have the opportunity to pursue their career goals while reflecting on the true spirit of a generation who worked together to save the world. The first scholarships were awarded on June 6 in a moving ceremony that included both Ash and the students.



*Ash Rothlein presents the first scholarships from The Ash and Liz Rothlein Spirit of D-Day scholarship fund.*

Ash and Bobbie continue to give – and though their financial support has been an amazing gift for the Memorial - it is their dedication to remember so that others do not forget that has been the real blessing. Their strength of spirit and character is a gift we can never repay and a treasure we all hold on to. Long after they are gone, they will remain a treasured part of who we are and how we can all achieve more in our own lives. They are the heroes among us who quietly do good inspiring all of us along the way.

For more information on donating to the “Ash and Liz Rothlein Spirit of D-Day” scholarship fund or how to apply for the annual scholarship as a student, please call 540-586-DDAY or email [bgregory@dday.org](mailto:bgregory@dday.org).



# KEEPING THEIR MEMORY ALIVE:

Twelve Days of Meaningful Events in May and June



*Desmond Doss, Jr. (left) and Pat Waters lay a wreath on June 6, 2018.*

“I am truly overwhelmed by the magnitude of where I am and what this is all about. I’m humbled to stand before you; but I am excited to be part of the remembrance and recognition of those who made [our] freedom become a reality.”

With these words George Patton Waters, the grandson of famed WWII general George S. Patton, embodied the reason a crowd of 1,740 were gathered on that sunny morning last June 6th. To pay tribute, to say thank you, to be reminded of the costs of freedom—this is why the National D-Day Memorial hosts commemorations and events before deeply-moved audiences. Your support makes this possible!

Our annual D-Day commemoration was only one part of an extraordinary two-week period of events. It started days before with Memorial Day—always one of our best-attended events, with a crowd of 1,107 this year. Keynote speaker Brigadier General John Mountcastle challenged the audience to remember those who have served and sacrificed. The other highlights of the day included the dedication of the Bobbie G. Johnson Pavilion and the Eastern Rock Garden in memory of Raymond and Gladys Smoot, as well as the newest installation of Veterans Bricks.

On June 5th the Memorial, in cooperation with the history department at Liberty University, presented a day-long academic conference on “WWII in Film.” With scholars coming from as far away as Canada and Hawaii, sessions covered such subjects as the portrayal of submarine warfare in cinema and the use of training films in the British Commonwealth. The keynote speaker was noted WWII scholar Dr. Donald Miller, who spoke on “Air Mastery on D-Day,” and also introduced a special screening of “Saving Private Ryan” that evening.



The next day, on June 6, our commemoration of the Normandy Landings was held with several dozen WWII veterans among the appreciative crowd. In addition to the moving ceremony, featuring Pat Waters and Desmond Doss, Jr. (the son of Medal of Honor recipient Desmond Doss of Lynchburg), the first recipients of the Ash and Liz Rothlein Scholarship were announced—high school seniors who go to college this fall determined to emulate the spirit and service of the D-Day generation. Later in the day, a new plaque recalling FDR’s D-Day Prayer was dedicated by the Patriarchs Militant Department, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, who underwrote the cost of the plaque.

Finally capping off the busy 12-day stretch, two commemorative markers were dedicated on June 8 in downtown Bedford, raising awareness of the role of the Bedford Boys and of the hometown industries which helped win the war. More such downtown markers are planned this fall, helping solidify the linkages between the Memorial and Centertown Bedford.

Because of your ongoing support, you are keeping the memory of those who secured our liberty alive. Thank you!



# UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL

- ★ **Saturday, September 22, 11:00 AM—POW/MIA Ceremony:** In this moving ceremony, the Memorial pays special tribute to those who are Missing in Action or who endured a Prisoner of War experience. Our speaker will be Marilyn Moriarty, professor of English and Creative Writing at Hollins University. She will tell of the experiences of her mother, an operative in the French Underground during WWII, and her plight as a prisoner of the Gestapo. Free admission from 10 a.m. until noon.
- ★ **Thursday, September 27, Noon—Lunchbox Lecture:** Did you know that thousands of American women did vital codebreaking work for the military in World War II, housed in special facilities around the nation and sworn to absolute secrecy? In this can't-miss program, you'll have the chance to meet one such unsung heroine of the war, Dorothy Braden Bruce of Lynchburg, and hear her story of how, among other things, she knew the war was over before the president did. The program is free and open to the public, and will be held in the Pavilion at the Memorial.
- ★ **Sunday, September 30, Time TBD:** Gold Star Mother's Appreciation Day: A wreath will be laid at the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument in remembrance of those who have lost a loved one in service to their country.
- ★ **Friday, October 5, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM—Homeschool Day:** During this special event, homeschool families and co-ops get to experience the National D-Day Memorial's field trip program. Students will be given the opportunity to meet WWII veterans and interact with living historians. Hands-on activities will illustrate various aspects of WWII history. A complimentary guided tour is included during your visit. Registration and pre-payment is required by Friday, September 21. Admission is \$5.00 per person and children 5 and under are free. Contact the Education Department at (540) 586-DDAY or [education@dday.org](mailto:education@dday.org) for more information.
- ★ **Monday, November 12, 11:00 AM—Veterans Day Observance:** Take time to honor all who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces during this special event. The program will include special music, guest speaker Brigadier General Lapthe Flora, and recognition of all veterans. Guests are asked to bring their own chair. The latest installment of veteran bricks will also be dedicated. Free admission 10 a.m. until noon.
- ★ **December 14-16, 6:00-9:00 PM—Flames of Memory and Christmas in Wartime Presentation:** As twilight deepens and obscures the surrounding mountains, the Memorial will honor the 4,413 men killed on D-Day. Arranged throughout the monument, thousands of luminaries will shine in recognition of Overlord's fallen and in tribute to the ultimate sacrifice each made to relight the lamp of freedom. Luminaries are sold throughout the year and may be purchased in honor or in memory of anyone who has served. A printed program will be distributed during the event and will include the tributes. Call (540) 586-DDAY for info or email [giving@dday.org](mailto:giving@dday.org).
- ★ **Saturday, December 15, Time TBD—Wreaths Across America:** Each year in December, Wreaths Across America lays thousands of wreaths throughout the country; a moving tribute to remember, honor, and teach the sacrifices made by our nation's service members. In 2018, the National D-Day Memorial will participate in this moving display which coincides with our annual Flames of Memory and Christmas in Wartime Presentation. Call (540) 586-DDAY or visit [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org) for more information.

*Stay up to date on event announcements and additional programs throughout the year by checking [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org) and social media!*



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