

Brittany Pointe Estates Veterans Affairs Committee



BPE Pointer Article

Veterans' Corner

by Bob Berger

Remembering the “Greatest Generation” – Part 3, D-Day June 6, 1944

It's almost impossible to believe that it has been 75 years since the Allied invasion of Normandy, France. This invasion started a little after midnight on June 6, 1944, as three divisions of commandos parachuted into enemy territory and began the battle for Europe. This strategic effort is depicted in the Academy Award Winning movie, “The Longest Day”, which you can watch at 7:00 PM on channel 1979. The movie is based on a book of the same name by Cornelius Ryan. Here is a quote from the movie as spoken by German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel: “Just look at it, gentlemen. How calm... how peaceful it is. A strip of water between England and the continent... between the Allies and us. But beyond that peaceful horizon... a monster waits. A coiled spring of men, ships, and planes... straining to be released against us. But, gentlemen, not a single Allied soldier shall reach the shore. Whenever and wherever this invasion may come, gentlemen... I shall destroy the enemy there, at the water's edge. Believe me, gentlemen, the first 24 hours of the invasion will be decisive. For the Allies as well as the Germans, it will be the longest day... The longest day.”

The Allies began planning the “Second Front” in early 1942. Both Roosevelt and Churchill knew the only way to defeat Nazi Germany was to liberate France and fight across the Rhine River. Their ally, Russia, was insisting on such an invasion to take the pressure off them in the east. The plan, code named “Overlord”, was one of the most guarded secrets of World War II. In total, it would require Allied forces of 132,000 soldiers, 23,000 paratroopers, nearly 12,000 airplanes and more than 6,000 ships of all sizes. Many senior generals felt strongly that the plan was too complicated because it required precise activities to be accomplished on time. Never in the annals of history had any military force ever attempted an invasion of such magnitude.

As I sat at my computer pondering how to describe this heroic battle, I concluded that a small article in the BPE Pointer would not be possible. However, I can and will declare our deep appreciation to all those men and women who gave so much to secure our freedoms. Over the years we have seen and heard the stories of our combatants who were all so brave. Each of them faced the challenges that ultimately won the war. There were also many others who did not experience combat but without whom the Allies surely would have lost. A short list of some of the occupations that were critical to the war effort includes Logistics (truck drivers, refueling both land & sea, food & supplies delivery, train engineers, maintenance field and depot levels), Procurement, Manufacturing, Communications, Intelligence (counter-intelligence), Chaplains, Medical (medics, nurses, doctors, aid stations, field hospitals), Accounting and Finance,

Engineers (combat engineers), etc. A special recognition goes to all who manned the ships of both the Navy and Merchant marine. These individuals risked their lives across all the oceans of the world to bring food, ammunition, planes, fuel, cannons, tanks, uniforms and medical supplies to our allied troops, laterally all the utensils of war. The Navy moved soldiers and Marines to the battle fields in North Africa, Mediterranean, Pacific and Europe. Its planes and big guns supported the ground assaults. One last point, these ships who brought the soldiers to battle also transported the wounded to safety and home.

To Brittany's remaining World War Two veterans, we salute and Thank You! Our Veterans Affairs Committee invites these veterans and their families to attend a special "WW2 Veterans Appreciation Ceremony" being held on June 6, 2019 at 2:00 PM in our auditorium.

