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## The AP Covers D-Day

### By Richard Pyle

One day in the first week of June, 1944, a teletype operator in the London bureau of the Associated Press sat at her post and practiced the sending of messages -- sharpening her skills for a big day that might come at any time. Somehow, one of those test messages slipped onto the open wire to New York, triggering an inadvertent and potentially costly crisis.

The errant cable suggested that the much-anticipated Allied invasion of Nazi-held France was at last underway. As far as is known, that "news" was briefly broadcast only in the U.S. by a couple of rip-and-read radio outlets, before AP editors realized the blunder and managed to stifle its further spread.

If German commanders even knew of it, they might have simply dismissed it as Allied disinformation. Already, U.S.-British preparations for history's biggest seaborne invasion included such elaborate ruses as inflatable dummy tanks to fool aerial snoopers, an imaginary army led by Lt. Gen **George Patton** and even a dead body with "secret documents," set adrift in the Mediterranean for the Germans to find. All of that was designed to dupe Chancellor Hitler into thinking the invasion target was the Pas de Calais, where the English Channel is narrowest.

Whenever and wherever it came, the assault on Hitler's heavily fortified "Atlantic Wall" on the French coast would be, for hundreds of news correspondents waiting to cover

it, the biggest story yet in the war in Europe.

Given D-Day's vastly more important logistical demands, U.S. Gen. **Dwight D. Eisenhower's** Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force headquarters had wisely turned the planning of news coverage over to the press itself -- with AP, as the preeminent news agency of the time, in a lead role.



**Robert Bunnelle**, AP London bureau chief and head of the London Foreign Correspondents Association, was put in overall charge. He arranged for Atlantic cable and radio feeds, carrier pigeons to bring news from the beaches, and assigned **Wes Gallagher**, AP's top war correspondent in Europe, to hand-pick 38 journalists to go ashore with the troops. (Gallagher himself was still recuperating from injuries suffered in North Africa, where he had been rescued from an overturned jeep by an Army officer named **William Westmoreland**).

Gallagher gave priority to wire service and other reporters facing deadline pressure, and AP staffers who knew him as AP's chief in later years could well imagine the imperious "WG" squelching any who complained of being passed over -- although the only one recorded as having raised a fuss was **A. J. Liebling** of New Yorker magazine, who never forgave Gallagher for excluding him from the first wave. The great **Ernie Pyle** didn't make the cut, either, but he recouped with three brilliant columns, based in part on a walk along dead-and-debris littered Omaha Beach the next day.

Unknown to the press, stormy conditions over the Channel had prompted Eisenhower to postpone the invasion, code-named Operation Neptune and originally scheduled for Monday, June 5, by one day. But Allied officials knew that neither bad weather nor the risk to secrecy could permit any further delay.

Whereas AP had almost jumped the gun with a premature invasion report, the real scoop, when it came, was from an even less expected source \_ the enemy.

As described in the AP history, "Breaking News," the teletype printer that delivered reports from Germany's official Trans-Ocean news agency to the London bureau "came suddenly to life at 6:30 a.m. on the murky morning of June 6, 1944," and the message was quickly translated into English and cabled urgently to New York:

*LONDON, June 6 (AP) \_ The German news agency Transocean reported in a broadcast early today that Allied troops had begun landing near Lehavre at the mouth of the Seine river in France, and termed the blow the beginning of "invasion operations."*

*Allied parachute troops also dropped "on the northern tip of the Normandy peninsula," the broadcast said. The London desk dutifully added, "There was no immediate Allied confirmation."*

At the AP Foreign Desk in New York, five bells on the incoming London printer alerted veteran overnight editor **John Aspinwall**, who tore off the bulletin and relayed it swiftly to the General Desk. It hit the A-wire at 12:37 a.m. Eastern War Time, six minutes ahead of other news agencies.

In the New York Times city room seven blocks away, the early foreign desk staff wondered if the Trans-Ocean report was itself "some sort of Nazi disinformation," former Times managing editor **Arthur Gelb** told AP in a 2007 interview. Gelb, who in 1944 was a 20-year-old copy boy with one week on the job, said the Times, unable to get any official comment in Washington at that hour, went with the AP report. (Gelb died May 20 at age 90).

Back in London, phone calls alerted Gallagher and hundreds of other correspondents to report posthaste to Eisenhower's headquarters, where in a tense briefing, SHAEF officers spelled out the heretofore secret plan for Operation Neptune, and gave reporters an hour to write and clear their stories through censors before a 9:30 a.m. release time.

A mosaic of information was swiftly forming elsewhere \_ sketchy details from German voice transmissions picked up by a radio listening post outside London, and even from interviewers seeking public reaction from early-rising Londoners.

At 9:32 a.m. \_ two minutes past official release time \_ a military courier delivered a packet to the AP office. It contained SHAEF's Communique No. 1, affirming that Allied naval and air forces "began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France," and Gallagher's 1,500 word bulletin story, which began:

*SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, June 6 (AP) \_ Allied troops landed on the Normandy coast of France in tremendous strength by cloudy daylight today and stormed several miles inland with tanks and infantry in the grand assault which Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called a crusade in which "we will accept nothing less than full victory."*

The first eyewitness report came from AP reporter **Gladwin Hill** in an observation plane skimming above the shore. But early, fragmentary details from the five invasion beaches gave little hint of the carnage occurring at Omaha Beach, where the U.S. First Infantry Division, the "Big Red One," had run up against the fiercest Nazi resistance.

There, AP's **Don Whitehead**, already known as "Beachhead Don" for his previous landings in Sicily and Italy \_ and described by his pal **Ernie Pyle** as the best of the combat reporters \_ had seen the radio-equipped jeep that was to have transmitted reporters' dispatches to London destroyed, and was now huddled with men of the 16th Infantry Regiment in the dubious shelter of a German blockhouse that had been knocked out by naval gunfire. He later reported how the 16th Regiment's commander, Col. **George Taylor**, had rallied his men by saying, "Gentlemen, we're being killed on this beach. Let's go inland and be killed!"



*Richard Pyle at Omaha Beach, February 2011*

During the day, Whitehead and others managed to get stories out by the time-honored war correspondents' practice of scribbling reports in notebooks and giving them to sailors and officers heading back across the Channel. Exhausted after a sleepless 48 hours, Whitehead took a sedative and collapsed in a foxhole, where Ernie Pyle found him the next morning.

AP photo coverage on D-Day fell short of expectations as chaos on the beaches kept pool photographers from getting ashore. Miraculously, all other AP staffers who did make it survived. The only casualty was reporter **Henry Jameson**, wounded when a German 88-millimeter shell hit his landing craft. **Roger Greene** had just landed on Sword Beach when three British commandos were killed a few feet away.

Eisenhower knew that Operation Neptune could prove a disaster at the water's edge, and carried in his pocket that day a written statement taking full personal responsibility for its failure. However, the Allied forces had gained the 100-meter high bluffs behind the beaches by mid-afternoon, and as **Wes Gallagher** had reported \_ perhaps somewhat prematurely \_ that morning, had indeed "stormed several miles inland with tanks and infantry."

Thus AP was ahead on the D-Day story in every way \_ and even ahead of Hitler who, as those Allied forces surged eastward toward Paris, was still arguing with his frustrated Wehrmacht commanders whether Normandy was the real invasion or just a clever Allied diversion.

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*Richard Pyle joined AP in Detroit in 1960, and retired in New York City in July 2009. His 49-year (minus three days) career included 16 years as a foreign correspondent in Asia and the Middle East and coverage of six wars including Vietnam, where he was Saigon bureau chief for the last three of five years (1968-73). He also was based in New York, Washington, Tokyo, Cairo and Bahrain, with special assignments in Lebanon, Cuba, India, Southern Africa and Albania. An Army veteran and student of military history, he is the author of two books including "Lost Over Laos," with the late Horst Faas, and numerous magazine articles and book chapters on journalism topics.*



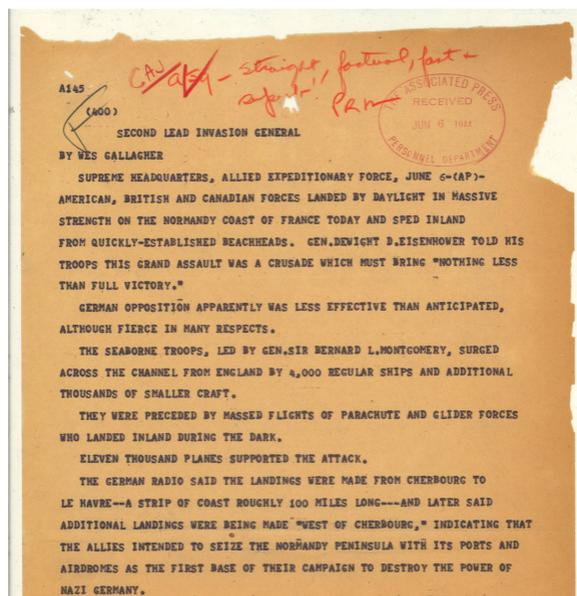
## **AP uncovers original Gallagher story of D-Day landings**

Approaching D-Day's 70th anniversary, AP archivists uncovered the original story of the landings, written by AP's chief invasion correspondent, **Wes Gallagher** (1911-97). Gallagher later became AP's ninth General Manager.

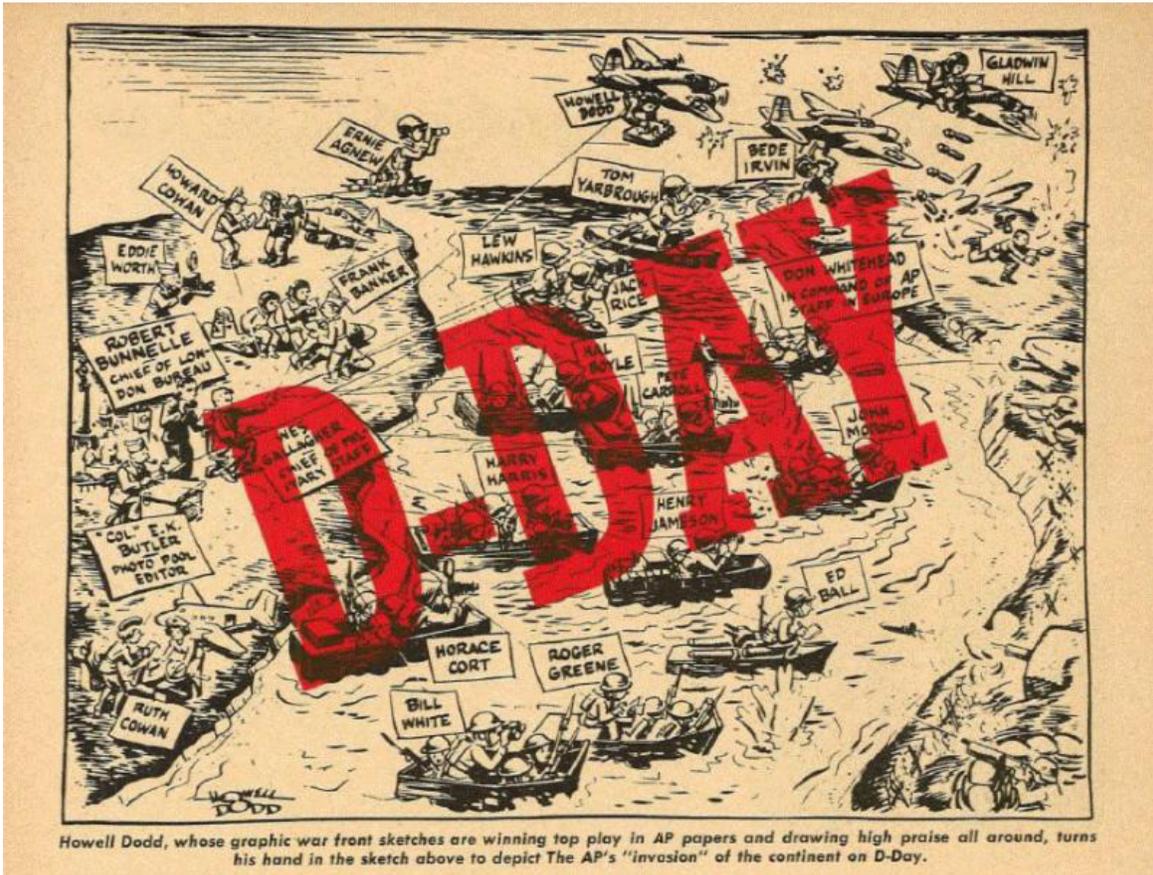
Gallagher was stationed at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces) in Portsmouth, England. His job was to take official military information and turn it into poetry, which he does here, as indicated by the red-penciling of **Paul Mickelson**, one of the New York editors who pulled this off the incoming printer. "Straight, factual, fast and superb!" he wrote.

At the bottom of the second sheet, the sign off "DA1005AEW" includes the initials of the sending operator and the time: 10:05 a.m. Eastern War Time. That would have been 3 p.m. in England.

Archivists are digging deeper into the files to find out if there are stories from the Normandy beachheads themselves.



*Second lead of original story of the landings at Normandy, written by AP's chief invasion correspondent, Wes Gallagher. [Read more of his report here](#) and [view MovieTone clip.](#)*



Where the boys were, as depicted in the June-July 1944 AP Inter-Office magazine for AP staff.

## D-Day architect was from Abilene; young AP journalist was also there

**By Dave Bergmeier**

The architect of the most extraordinary invasion -- D-Day -- was Five Star Gen. **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, a man from humble beginnings in Abilene, Kan., and it carried another significant historical thread.

Among the relationships he later nurtured with a young journalist, **Henry P. "Hank" Jameson**, who spent about 12 years with The Associated Press. Jameson was the first Allied correspondent to be wounded in the D-Day invasion of France on June 6, 1944. He had worked for the AP in Kansas City, Jefferson City, Mo., St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Washington and overseas as a World War II correspondent.



Henry P.  
"Hank"  
Jameson

According to the AP Inter-Office "Invasion Issue" from June-July 1944, Jameson was accompanying the Ninth Air Force Engineers when they hit a "hot beach." An 88mm shell hit their landing craft, slamming him against an armored car. Suffering a dislocated shoulder and a wrenched leg, he returned to England and brought back "several exclusive stories."

The fledgling journalist became owner of the Abilene Reflector-Chronicle in 1955 and was editor-publisher for many years until his death in October 1986. Many local business friends called him "Hank" as did his many friends from the journalism industry. Those who knew Henry at the newspaper always called him "Mr. Jameson," a beloved figure who was the original

"Mr. Abilene."

To loyal readers, his Ramblings column was a front page feature every day of the daily newspaper that he was associated with for more than 30 years. It gave readers a sense of who Jameson was and at times led to many stories that included personal barbs to friends with a dash of self-deprecating humor.

I did not personally know him like my predecessor, **Vivien Sadowski**, who became his successor after his death. She had the fortune of working for him for 13 years. She had a great appreciation for his writing skills, his charisma, the love of his town and the love of his country.

The two shared commonalities about the belief that fighting the tyranny of Nazism was something that had to be done and victory was the only acceptable outcome. Jameson was out front covering the war, like other journalists who became household names: Walter Cronkite, Ernie Pyle, Andy Rooney and Edward R. Murrow. Jameson and many other AP war correspondents did their duty, keeping those informed on the home front. It had to be tough duty. Sadowski was a teen-ager during World War II. Like many Americans she understood the pain of war. Young men were drafted and enlisted. They were sent overseas in the European and Pacific fronts. In some cases they were family members and friends would not return. On the home front, men, women and children did their duty, too.

People of that era shared a kindred spirit that had an unbreakable link. D-Day remained a personal experience that Jameson carried with him just like the many men who fought valiantly that day and the days that ensued until V-E Day 11 months later in May 1945.

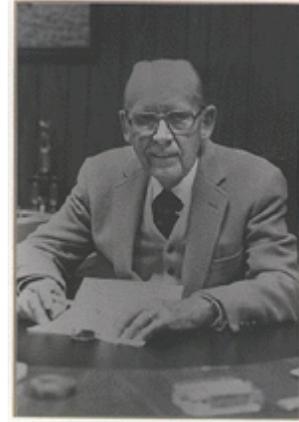
In an anniversary story about the invasion, Jameson wrote: "I have revisited the bloody Omaha Beach area of Normandy several times, never without choking up, shedding a tear and kneeling at the grave of one of my fallen co-workers. I left a little of my own flesh and blood there, too, on the D-Day invasion of Europe in World War II."

Getting personal accounts about June 6, 1944, are getting harder as these heroes from the Greatest Generation answer their final call.

Jameson, a friendly man who did not know a stranger, according to Sadowski, captured the fancy of those who knew him, but he also represented what happened to many men and women involved in D-Day and World War II. After the war they settled into their lives.

Those young men became the leaders in their communities. Some returned to their farms. Others returned to the family businesses, Others used the GI Bill, went to college and built careers that seemed impossible when they were fighting on a foreign continent, many miles from their loves ones.

The journalists, like Jameson, carried a wide spectrum of political views and most were known long after the war, but in the true spirit of war coverage, they were unified in their objectivity to "tell the story right" so that another dictator of the evil of Adolph Hitler could never take hold. The journalists did their part and the folks back home understood the horrific costs of war.



*Editor-publisher Henry "Hank" Jameson*

As we look back to the successful launch to end Nazi tyranny - - 70 years ago -- all of us who still walk this Earth need to have a great reverence to those who did their part, those who made the orders, those who carried them out, those who provided the support, and those who accurately chronicled that day and the remaining days of World War II.

The ever optimistic Jameson was proud of the fact that he was there to see first hand the Allied Forces' invasion. Being from Abilene, Kan., gave the future editor-publisher added importance. He was the second editor and publisher in the history of the Reflector-Chronicle following Charles M. Harger.

Eisenhower never forgot the relationship and Jameson wrote a book about Ike, chronicling little-known anecdotes of his rise to become the nation's 34th president. It was Eisenhower himself who suggested Jameson should write a book.

According to his good friend, the late **Bill Jeffcoat**, Jameson was very popular in town. Jeffcoat, a photographer who also was a friend of Ike, wrote in remembrance: "As the Eisenhower popularity grew, so did the newspaper and Henry. When out of town media arrived, the first thing they sought out was the editor of the paper. The paper and Henry became the connection for all important events concerning Ike and Abilene. Henry was 'it' during the Eisenhower era, and he basked in the limelight and met a lot of very high-up people in the media and from the White House. He wrote some books on Ike and on early Abilene days. Henry was a great contributor due to his outlook on the town and for the development of the Eisenhower Center."

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*Dave Bergmeier was associated with the Abilene Reflector-Chronicle for more than 23 years, including 14 years as editor-publisher of the newspaper. He is now managing editor of the High Plains Journal in Dodge City, Kan.*

## **Hitting the beaches ... to shoot only photographs**

*(Marty Lederhandler, formerly 1st Lt. Martin Lederhandler, took part in the D-Day landings with the 4th Infantry Division Signal Corps Battalion. Lederhandler was a photographer for The Associated Press for 66 years, making him the longest-serving staff member. He retired in 2001 and died in 2010. On the 40th anniversary of the invasion in 1984, Lederhandler returned to Normandy to photograph the landing site and filed this story.)*

**By Martin Lederhandler**  
**Associated Press Photographer**

STE. MARIE DU MONT, France (AP) \_ I returned to Normandy after 40 years, but this

time it was a peaceful and friendly invasion by land and not by water.

As I drove toward this small town near Carentan, I saw the typical hedgerows of the Normandy farmlands, bramble-like hedges so thick and strong that the farmers need no other fences for their livestock.

Somewhere in one of those rows I spent my first night of D-Day.



*Marty Lederhandler in military gear at German crossroads.*

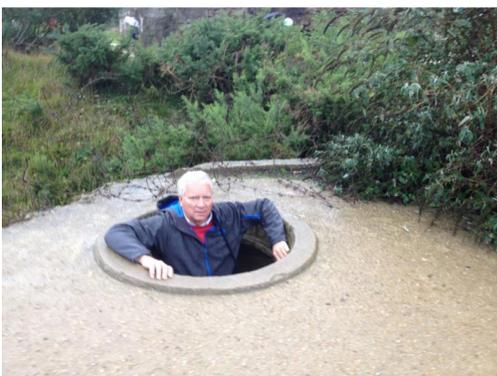
I recalled waking up the next morning and sensing something wrong and alien and began to search the thick bushes, where I found a dead and very young German officer. He had used the cover of the hedges for his machine gun nest but was killed by advancing infantry.

Later, when the tanks came ashore, they found the hedges clogging their treads and had to have large blades welded in front to cut their way through the fields.

Shortly after the fields ended and I found myself on the beaches and sand dunes between Varreville and the Le Madeleine. Facing the Channel on this cool gray day, I tried to picture the D-Day activity. I asked myself, did it all happen here, where some 4,000 ships, planes and hundreds of thousands of men came ashore?

All I saw were fisherman and half a dozen other people with their children and dogs romping on the beach. I still was not convinced a huge armada landed here 40 years before. I needed proof and began walking in hopes of finding a spent cartridge shell, something to tell me again this was a battlefield.

There was death and destruction, fear and acts of bravery, but there were also some small victories.



*Connecting editor Paul Stevens in German pillbox during visit to Normandy in 2013.*

One was to be alive and mobile enough to get off the beach and move inland away from the accurate German artillery fire.

I continued to walk eastward to a rise in the dunes and coming over it, I stopped and there it was. I choked a bit, for in back of the dunes was a German gun emplacement. Then I knew: Yes, it did all happen here, on Utah beach, and for miles eastward to Omaha, Juno, Sword and Gold beaches of the Allied Forces \_ British, Canadian and French landings.

I examined the gun and looked up to see a monument nearby that listed some of the units of the landings of D-Day and afterward. Here, etched forever in history, I found the name of my unit, the 165th Signal Photo Company attached to the 4th Infantry Division.

Without shame, I burst into tears for a moment and the French officers turned away politely and fell silent and I was grateful they let me have my moment.

I continued to move along the beach photographing the now peaceful scenes and again looking out to the waters of the Channel, to recapture in my mind that day of June 6, 1944.

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Dawn was about 6 a.m. \_ cloudy, bright and not too cold as I stood on the deck of a landing ship tank, or LST, and began to photograph the huge armada of ships unfolding in the early light. Thousands lined the horizon and the sky was an umbrella of planes \_ all ours.

I then had to transfer to a landing barge, called a rhino, but continued taking pictures since I had two carrier pigeons on my back as messengers. They were to carry film across the Channel to England for quick radiophoto dispatch to the United States.

Since the pigeons couldn't carry a full roll of film, I soon finished making 10 exposures and placed them inside a special container harness the birds wore, including caption information, my name, unit and area.

Hitting the beach after our jeep conked out in the water, I finished my second roll of pictures of units of the 4th Infantry Division and got rid of the second pigeon.

Eventually, reaching Cherbourg about six weeks later, I came across a German newspaper in an enemy command post and was surprised to find one of my pictures on the front page.

The Germans had captured the birds and distributed the photos as propaganda, saying they showed the U.S. forces being destroyed on the beaches of France. It gave me a laugh to see they also gave me a byline \_ and spelled my difficult name correctly.



*German newspaper with Lederhandler's photo.*

From then on, I was nicknamed "Pigeon" Lederhandler by my companions. Subsequently in German-occupied countries, I found other papers and magazines with pictures from those two misguided rolls of film.

All along the way, from the beaches, the Cherbourg, St. Lo and eastward to the Liberation of Paris, people stopped us with hugs and kisses and sometimes a bottle of wine. With tears in their eyes, they said, "Where were you? ... What took you so long? ... We waited ... Thank God you are here ... Vive la Liberation..."

On Aug. 25, the French forces under **Gen. LeClerc** entered Paris with units of the 4th Division, for which I was grateful and I took part in the Liberation.

That day and the following three turned out to be among the most memorable, with thousands of Parisiens going wild, the French underground chasing the remnants of Germans and **Gen. Charles DeGaulle** parading down the Champs d'Elysees.

I spent four days on the Normandy beaches this week and I could not help but reflect on how grateful I was to be able to return to the scenes that are now clearly etched in my mind. For the last time, I looked to the Channel waters picturing that tremendous flow of men and machines \_ then the landings, the moans of the wounded, the dead scattered about, silent and undemanding.

But on those beaches, there will always be respect for their sacrifices, from the monuments erected in their honor, from the French people and their loved ones here and at home. Many are coming this year to visit the grave sites of the beautiful cemetery at St. Laurent Sur Mer where over 9,000 are buried.

I spent a morning there and at the edge of the crosses and stars of David is a simple sign: "Silence and Respect."

## A Reflection

**Paul Stevens** visited the World War II Memorial while in Washington this week, his first time back after escorting his father, then 93, on an Honor Flight to the nation's capitol.

His father was an Army artillery captain who was part of the U.S. forces that marched into Rome and liberated that city on June 4, 1944, two days before the D-Day invasion at Normandy.

The memorial stands as a tribute to all who fought in the war and particularly the 400,000 American soldiers who lost their lives.

The Honor Flights that bring World War II veterans to Washington continue from all parts of the country. But as age thins the ranks of those who participated in that that conflict, more and more of the one-day flights include veterans of the Korean War.

An average of 555 American veterans of World War II die each day. and Paul's dad, who was a newspaper editor for more than a half century, was one of those statistics when he passed away at the age of 96 on July 17, 2013, in Fort Dodge, Iowa.



"Pigeon" Lederhandler's story as chronicled in a 1994 AP Log.



Walter B. Stevens



*World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Paul Stevens)*

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