

Virginians at War

WWII: D-Day, Invasion of Normandy

Resource Packet

Contains: Glossary, Timeline, Profile of a Soldier, Images, Discussion Questions, Additional Resources

Program Description: Virginians at War: D-Day Normandy uses veteran interviews and a variety of primary sources to tell the story of the invasion of Normandy in June 1944. The invasion of Normandy was a defining moment in the Second World War, propelling the Allied Powers to victory over Hitler and the Nazis. The film highlights the anxiety of the days before the landing, and explains in great personal detail the chaos and loss that followed.

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Length: 16:41

Streaming link: <https://vimeo.com/367063396>

Featured Speakers:

SSGT John L. Burke, Richmond
CPL Eugene W. Crews, Richmond
LTC Joseph DeGenaro, Richmond
SSGT Edward B. Farley, Petersburg
LTC John H. Hagstrom, Annandale
RM2/C Lynn Martin, Mechanicsville
LTC Albert V. Mathwin, Warrenton
TSGT Raymond C. Mays, Richmond
2nd LT Carl D. Proffitt Sr., Charlottesville
S1/C Gerald Thompson, Staunton
BG Alvin D. Ungerleider, Burke



GLOSSARY

IMPORTANT TERMS

- **Amphibious training:** military training involving both land and water
- **Atlantic wall:** a system of defenses built by the Germans along the Atlantic coast of Europe and Scandinavia to prevent Allied troops from retaking occupied countries
- **C-47:** Douglas C-47 Dakota; a U.S. aircraft used to transport military personnel and equipment
- **D-Day:** the day any operation is to begin; each amphibious landing of WWII had its own D-Day, however the landings at Normandy are most commonly recognized as “D-Day” because of the importance of the operation
- **Flak:** anti-aircraft fire
- **German 88’s:** 8.8cm Flak; a German anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery gun used by Germany during WWII
- **Hedgerows:** a short wall of shrubs and trees bordering a road, field or garden
- **Horsa gliders:** Airspeed Horsa; a British aircraft used to carry Allied troops
- **LCVP:** Landing craft, vehicle, personnel; Higgins boat; used for amphibious landings during WWII
- **LST:** Landing ship, tank; ships used to support amphibious operations by carrying troops, vehicles, and supplies to shore without supporting infrastructure (docks, piers, etc.)
- **Mae West:** a nickname for the life vests used by service members during WWII; named after the actress Mae West
- **Marshalling area:** a location on base where unit personnel, equipment, and materials are accounted for and prepared for onward movement
- **Moors:** Moorland; an upland, hilly area with grasses and shrubs, exposed to cold winds
- **OCS:** Officer Candidate School; a training course for troops aiming to become a commissioned officer
- **Operation Neptune:** the Naval component of Operation Overlord
- **Operation Overlord:** the Allied codename for the invasion of Normandy
- **Schü-mine:** a German mine used during WWII; made of a wooden box and a pin trigger that detonates when stepped on
- **U-boats:** Unterseeboot; German military submarine that was used by German forces during WWI and WWII

IMPORTANT PLACES

- **English Channel:** a channel in the Atlantic Ocean that runs between England and France
- **Greenham Common:** a Royal Air Force base in Berkshire, England; used by RAF and U.S. Army Air Force during WWII
- **Normandy, France:** a northwest region of France, directly across the English Channel from England
- **Slapton, England:** a coastal village in Devon, a southwestern district in England; chosen as a training facility for U.S. troops prior to the invasion of Normandy because of its similarity to Normandy’s beaches
- **Weymouth, England:** a coastal town in Dorset, a southern English county; a major site of deployment for U.S. troops for the Normandy invasion



D-DAY TIMELINE

- **March 1943:** the Chief of Staff Supreme Allied Commander group is formed to create a plan of invasion in France
- **April 27, 1944:** Allied troops begin training in Slapton Sands for an amphibious invasion
- **May 8, 1944:** Officials set the date of June 5th as D-Day
- **June 4, 1944:** Troops begin to depart for France on ships, but are postponed due to poor weather
- **June 5, 1944:** The weather clears and troops again deploy on ships; Operation Neptune is underway
- **June 6, 1944:** over 150,000 Allied troops land on the beaches of Normandy
 - 12:05 AM:** Allied bombers attack German guns along the shore
 - 12:15 AM:** initial airborne landings begin
 - 1:00 AM:** the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division begin to land near Sainte-Merè-Église
 - 1:30 AM:** the U.S. 101st Airborne Division lands near Utah Beach
 - 1:50 AM:** the British 6th Airborne Division lands near the River Orne
 - 2:45 AM:** U.S. soldiers begin to come ashore via LCVP's
 - 3:00 AM:** Allied warships arrive and prepare for shore bombardment
 - 4:30 AM:** U.S. troops occupy the island of Saint-Marcouf
 - 5:30 AM:** Allied ships begin to bomb the shore
 - 6:30 AM:** American troops begin to storm Utah and Omaha Beaches
 - 7:25 AM:** British troops begin to storm Gold and Sword Beaches
 - 7:35 AM:** Canadian troops land at Juno Beach
 - 9:30 AM:** Hermanville is liberated by French troops
 - 9:45 AM:** Utah Beach is cleared of German forces
 - 10:00 AM:** British troops liberate La Riviere
 - 11:00 AM:** Canadian troops liberate Bernieres
 - 1:30 PM:** Troops at Omaha Beach begin moving inland
 - 6:00 PM:** American forces liberate St Laurent
- **June 7, 1944:** the first French city, Bayeux, is liberated
- **June 27, 1944:** the German troops at Cherbourg surrender
- **June 30, 1944:** the German troops in the Cotentin Peninsula surrender
- **July 10, 1944:** the French city of Caen is liberated
- **July 18, 1944:** American forces occupy Saint-Lô
- **August 12, 1944:** Patton's Third Army captures the city of Alençon
- **August 25, 1944:** Paris is liberated

PROFILE OF A SOLDIER: FRANK D. PEREGORY



Rank: Technical Sergeant, U.S. Army.

Birthday: April 10, 1916.

Birthplace: Esmont, VA.

Unit: 116th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division.

Date of Action: June 8, 1944.

Awards: Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, Soldier's Medal.

TSGT Frank D. Peregory
(U.S. Army National Guard)

Medal of Honor Citation: On 8 June 1944, the 3d Battalion of the 116th Infantry was advancing on the strongly held German defenses at Grandcampe, France, when the leading elements were suddenly halted by decimating machine-gun fire from a firmly entrenched enemy force on the high ground overlooking the town. After numerous attempts to neutralize the enemy position by supporting artillery and tank fire had proved ineffective, T/Sgt. Peregory, on his own initiative, advanced up the hill under withering fire, and worked his way to the crest where he discovered an entrenchment leading to the main enemy fortifications 200 yards away. Without hesitating, he leaped into the trench and moved toward the emplacement. Encountering a squad of enemy riflemen, he fearlessly attacked them with hand grenades and bayonet, killed 8 and forced 3 to surrender. Continuing along the trench, he single-handedly forced the surrender of 32 more riflemen, captured the machine gunners, and opened the way for the leading elements of the battalion to advance and secure its objective. The extraordinary gallantry and aggressiveness displayed by T/Sgt. Peregory are exemplary of the highest tradition of the armed forces.

PROFILE OF A SOLDIER: JIMMIE W. MONTEITH



Rank: 1st LT, U.S. Army.

Birthday: July 1, 1917.

Birthplace: Low Moor, VA.

Unit: 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division.

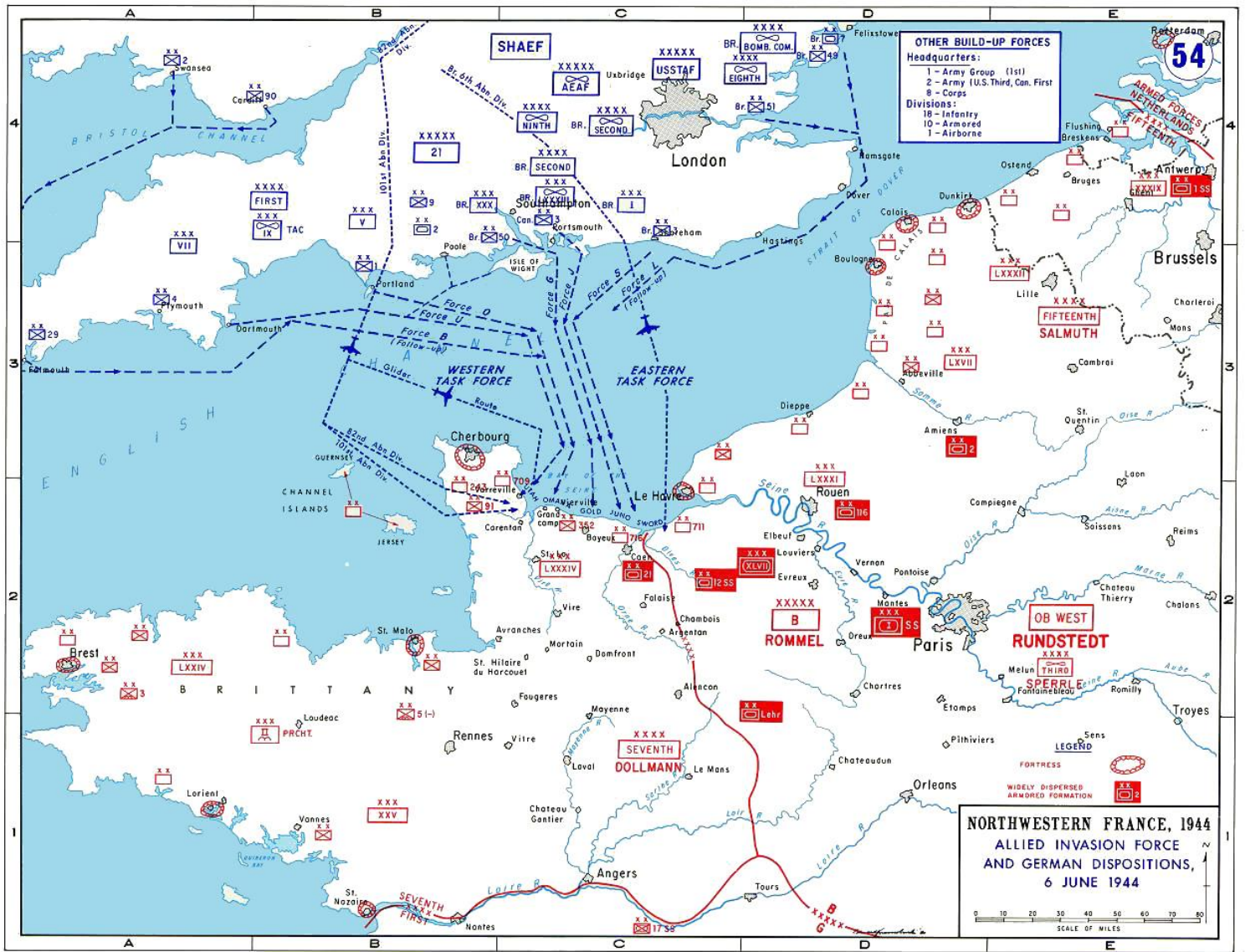
Date of Action: June 6, 1944.

Awards: Medal of Honor, Purple Heart.

1st LT Jimmie W. Monteith
(U.S. Army)

Medal of Honor Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on 6 June 1944, near Colleville-sur-Mer, France. 1st Lt. Monteith landed with the initial assault waves on the coast of France under heavy enemy fire. Without regard to his own personal safety he continually moved up and down the beach reorganizing men for further assault. He then led the assault over a narrow protective ledge and across the flat, exposed terrain to the comparative safety of a cliff. Retracing his steps across the field to the beach, he moved over to where 2 tanks were buttoned up and blind under violent enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. Completely exposed to the intense fire, 1st Lt. Monteith led the tanks on foot through a minefield and into firing positions. Under his direction several enemy positions were destroyed. He then rejoined his company and under his leadership his men captured an advantageous position on the hill. Supervising the defense of his newly won position against repeated vicious counterattacks, he continued to ignore his own personal safety, repeatedly crossing the 200 or 300 yards of open terrain under heavy fire to strengthen links in his defensive chain. When the enemy succeeded in completely surrounding 1st Lt. Monteith and his unit and while leading the fight out of the situation, 1st Lt. Monteith was killed by enemy fire. The courage, gallantry, and intrepid leadership displayed by 1st Lt. Monteith is worthy of emulation.





Map of Allied invasion plans and German positions

(U.S. Military Academy)



U.S. troops inside an LCV before landing at Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944

(U.S. Navy)



View of the invasion at Normandy, June 1944

(U.S. Navy)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Germany have control of Normandy, France in June 1944? How long had they occupied the territory?
2. What defensive measures had the Germans utilized on the beaches to prevent an Allied invasion?
3. When did the troops learn of their planned invasion? When was the invasion originally planned for, and why did it not occur?
4. How did veterans of the ground invasion describe the sights and sounds of the initial moments of the landing?
5. What deadly device on the beach was not recognized by Allied troops and killed many? What material did the Germans use for these devices?
6. Why is Bedford, Virginia home of the National D-Day Memorial? How do you think communities across the United States were impacted by the casualties from the D-Day Invasion of Normandy?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about the experiences of Virginians in World War II, view *Virginians at War: WWII Home Front* and other films at vawarmemorial.org. Looking to do more research? Check out the links below.

- Videos, articles, and other resources about the invasion from the US Navy. [Link](#)
- List of all the American units that were involved in the Normandy invasion. [Link](#)
- Timeline of the Normandy invasion. [Link](#)
- Readings and pictures of the Normandy invasion and beyond. [Link](#)

