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Rededication of the

5th Engineer Special Brigade Battle Monument

Omaha Beach, Normandy, France,
June 5th, 2014

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HISTORY of the 5TH ENGINEER (SPECIAL) BRIGADE



5th ESB participated in the D-Day landings on the Normandy shore (Omaha Beach) where they directed the logistical campaign that ensured the massive amounts of men and material coming ashore could be swiftly fed into the fight to conquer Axis forces. They remained on omaha Beach until November 19, 1944 when they began moving inland in support of combat forces. on January 4, 1945, the brigade HQ was transferred to the Seine section of Paris where it supervised combat engineering activities across Europe. It returned to the United States on July 11, 1945, and was inactivated at Camp gordon Johnston, Florida, on october 20 of that year.

The Brigade was composed of the following units:

37th Engineer Combat Battalion
336th Engineer Combat Battalion
348th Engineer Combat Battalion
151st Engineer Combat Battalion

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Staff Sergeant Joseph H. Debold, Army of the United States

My Great Uncle, Joe Debold, landed in the first wave of the assault on Omaha Beach immediately behind the infantry in the early morning hours of 6 June 1944.

His unit, the 348th Engineer (combat) Battalion, was part of the 5th Engineering (special) Brigade that landed directly in front of enemy bunker 62. When Joe's battalion landed, enemy infantry were still manning and firing from that station onto the beach.

In 1945 his unit erected a monument to the fallen of his brigade on top of that deadly bunker. Over the years that monument has been defaced, vandalized and suffered from harsh weather conditions.

This is the story of the supporters and volunteers who worked for two years to rededicate this hallowed ground.

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Our Mission:

1. Replace the Amphibious Forces Logo on the Face of Monument
2. Repair Railings Around Monument
3. Seal Edges on Marble Slabs
4. Repair Paint inlay on Lettering
5. Clean and Buff Faces of Marble Slabs
6. Wash and Clean Pylon
7. Remove Stone Gravel
8. Rake Surrounding Areas
9. Clean Concrete Floor
10. Construct Small Retaining Wall for gravel and soil



8

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LEFT: As the bunker looked 3 days after the landing, June 7th, 1944.



BELOW: As the bunker looked in late 1945 with artificial harbors and other relics of the battle still on the beach.





1945

1960/70's



1980's



2000's



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THE WORK BEGINS AFTER 18 MONTHS OF PLANNING





Francois and his team arrive from Switzerland with their gear and Francois's historic jeep which is painted in the same livery as the Combat Engineers who landed on the beach.

Francois and his team gently remove the front marble face which had detached from the monument.

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Dressed in uniforms similar to the engineers who landed, Francois and his team prep the reverse side of the marble.



Yves and Jib remove old adhesive and prepare to apply new marine grade adhesive to the reverse side shown here.

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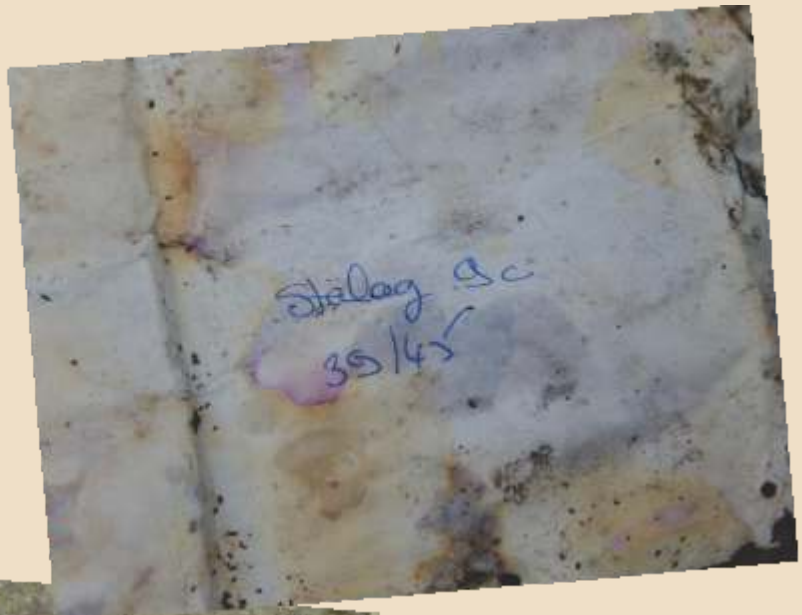



Francois and his team found quite a few notes and photos from local villagers who placed them behind the marble face which said thank-you for liberating them and or saving family members or children.



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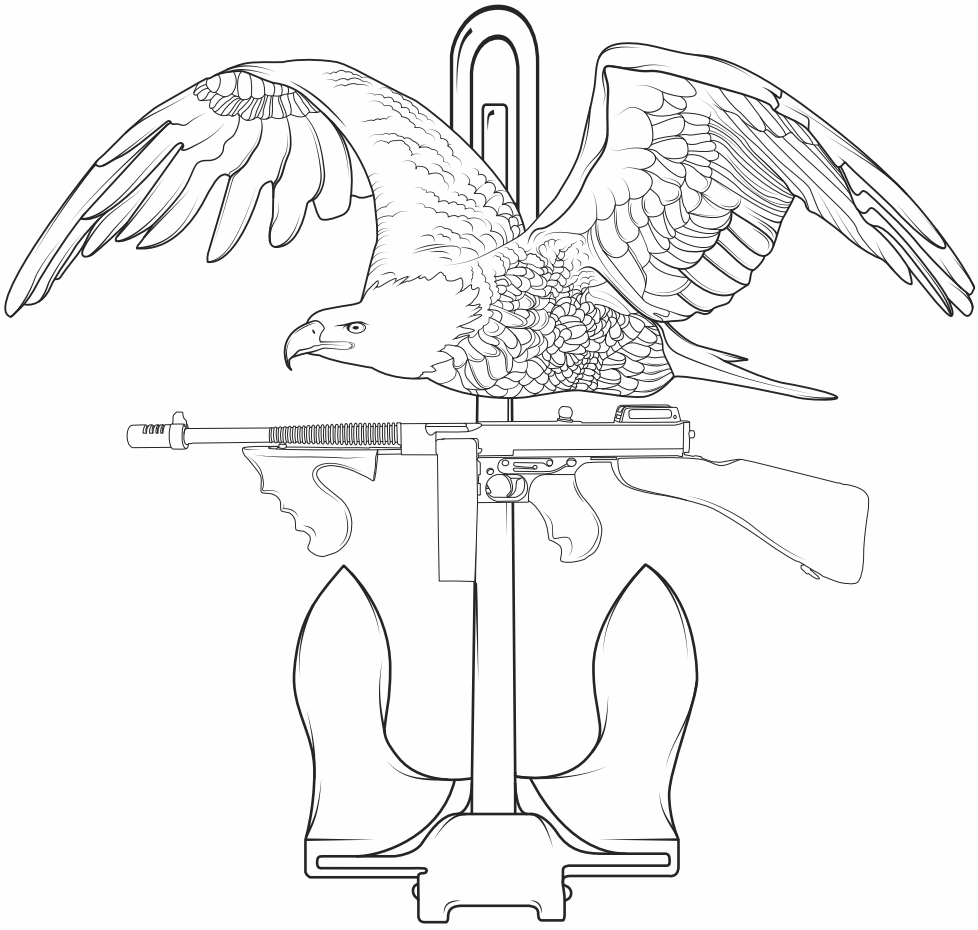

January 30th, 2014

Rendering of Replacement Unit Logo for 348th Eng Bn (Combat)
Beach Side Unit Memorial, Normandy, France

To be sculpted in cast bronze

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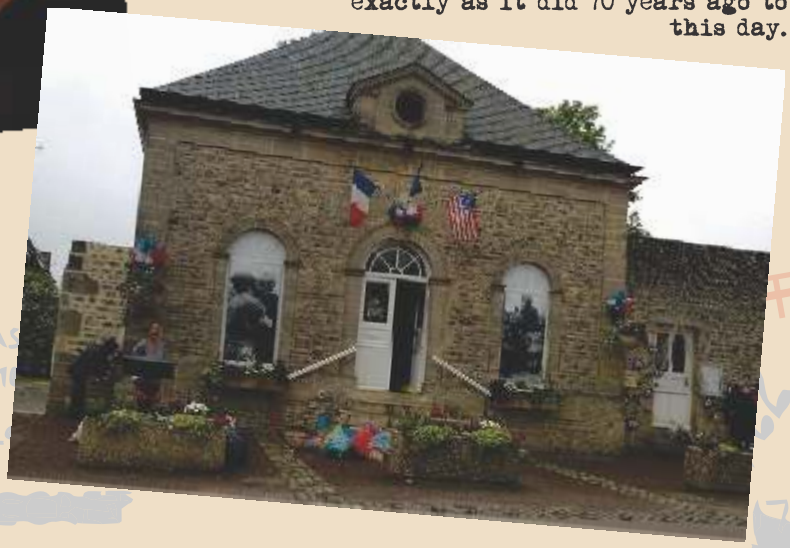
Joe and Jeff gingerly moving the new insignia to the installation site.



Our initial meeting with the Mayor of Colleville-sur-Mer who coordinates the ongoing care of the memorial with grateful citizens of the village.

The office of the Mayor in Colleville-sur-Mer looking almost exactly as it did 70 years ago to this day.



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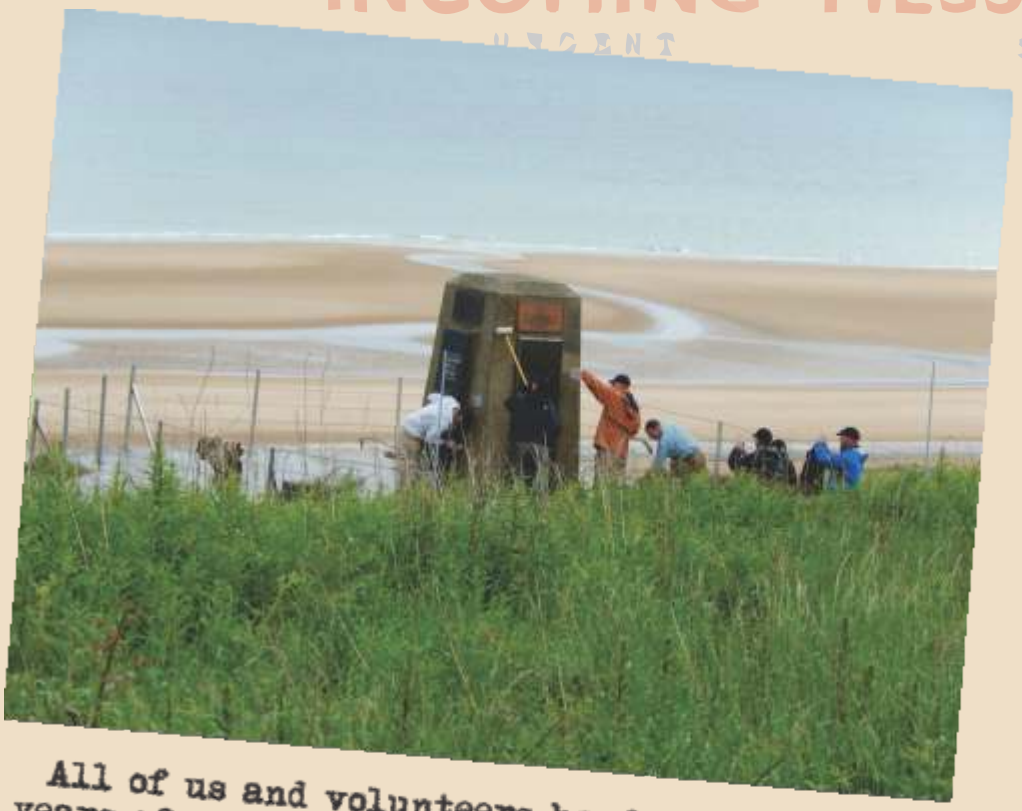

All of us and volunteers hand scrubbing 40 years of grime off the face of the concrete in the pouring rain prior to the drilling.



Yves and Francois gently tapping marking holes into the marble face to mark where the new holes will be drilled.

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The new insignia as it came out of the box.



Francois lining up the drilling guide on the face of the marble face of the monument.

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The first of the holes being drilled into the face of the marble. We were EXTREMELY concerned about the condition of the marble and that our efforts may crack it. We began with tiny pilot holes with our hammer drill and opened them up gradually with three different iterations.



More scrubbing and surface prep.

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More drilling and more incredible nervousness.



And finally we get all the holes drilled with no cracks or problems.

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Prepping the reverse side of the insignia by roughing the surface to accept our marine grade adhesive.



And on she goes.

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And it's on! Francois and I shake hands as we've spearheaded this restoration for 18 months and boy are we glad to see it on the memorial.

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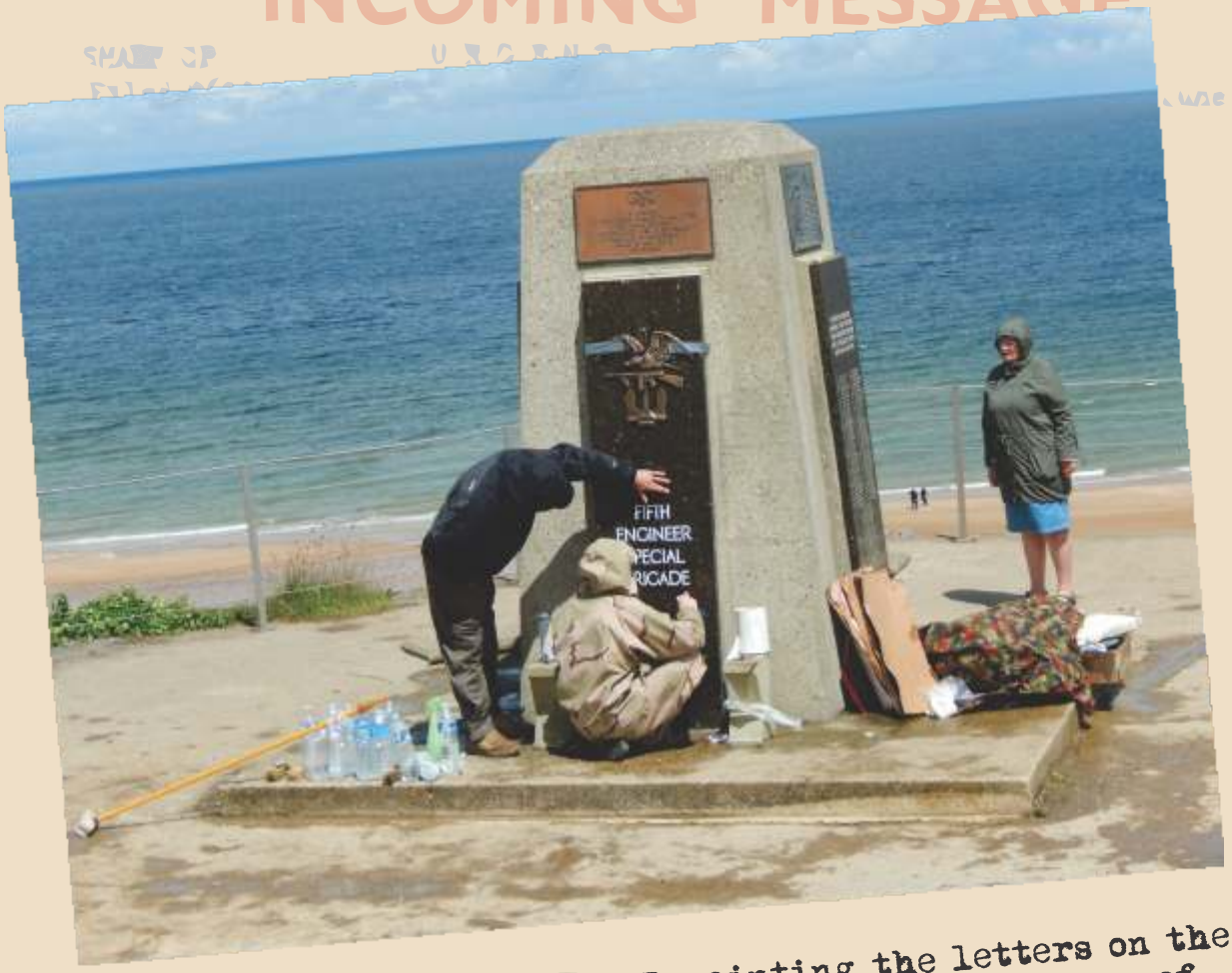



Repainting the letters on the front face after 40 years of abuse by saltwater, sun, and rain. After working for about two hours on the letters, one of the airmen stepped up and said, "Sir, I hand paint pinstripping and details on custom cars on base, can I help?" Of course you can! He did a spectacular job and we were honored that an airman was able to help make this happen with his special artistic talent.

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Getting ready to prep the monument for the re-dedication.



The Mayor of Coleville-su-Mer, Mr. Thomines and our team get ready for the start of the ceremony.

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REDEDICATION CEREMONY GUIDE
5 June 2014

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

1145– Attention and invitation to crowd to take seats.

1200– Invocation and blessing.

1205- Mayor of Colleville-sur-Mer, Patrick Thomines welcoming remarks.

1210– BG Funkhouser, Commandant US Army Engineering School.

1220– Guest of Honor – 348th landing veteran Andy Anderson and other's remarks.

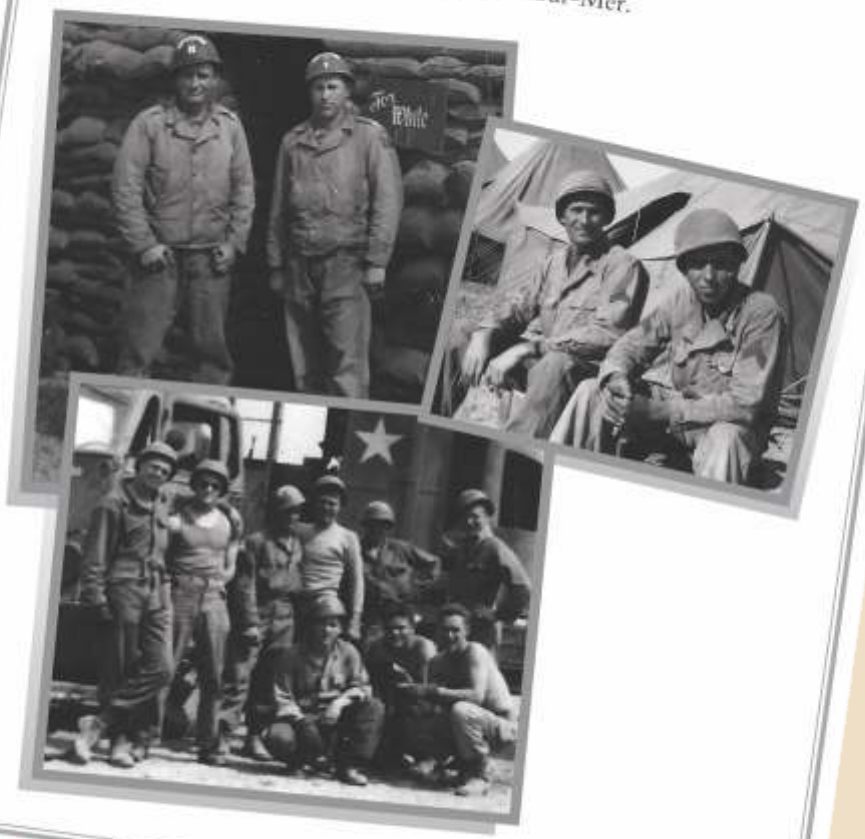
1300– Sharing of memories by 5th ESB or 348th veterans or others.

1315– History of the memorial and it's recent renovation.

1330– Reading of 348th veteran's poems from the war.

1345– Closing remarks by hosts.

1400– Departure to reception in Colleville-Sur-Mer.



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REDEDICATION CEREMONY GUIDE
5 June 2014

It Will Long Be Remembered

By Sgt. Otis Cook & T/4 Ray Freeburg, Company "A", 1945
Revised by "Ram's Head" Magazine

On the sixth day of June in the year forty-four
The great armies of freedom struck Normandy's shore
'Cross the Channel's blue waters came ships, thousands strong
Toward the beach where the Hun had been waiting so long.

'Twas for this we had trained through the months, through the years.
Through the hardships, the toil, through praises and jeers.
Yes, each man knew his role; but once "over the side"
There was nothing else left but in God to abide.

O, we rushed over the beaches by Dawn's meager light
The fierce Rangers were first to engage in the fight.
Engineers and the doughboys were next to the shore
While the enemy's guns dealt out wreckage and gore.

Paratroopers who dropped from the darkness of night
Met with cross-fire so feared and the Panthers Tank's might.
Men struggled ashore through water neck-high
As "Lightnings" and "Spitfires" rained death from the sky

There were land mines exploding with flesh-tearing blasts
At each step we did wonder, "Will this be our last?"
We attained the first hilltop, a blood-spattered gain
But was only the first of a mighty campaign.

The Grim Reaper took many a brave man away
As the blood trickled crimson on France's wet clay.
It will long be remembered how they bled, how they died
In that raging inferno by the Channel's swift tide.

★

Bernstein, Jerome
Private Briney
Coon, James
Cramer, Clarence
Evans, James
Goebel, James A.
Holt, Jesse
Martin, Albert H.
Mattson, Maurice
Nuss, Dale
Russel, Everhard E.
Soto, Albert E.
Terhark, Russell

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Jeff giving a moving blessing and invocation prior to the ceremony beginning.



Francois giving an introduction in French.

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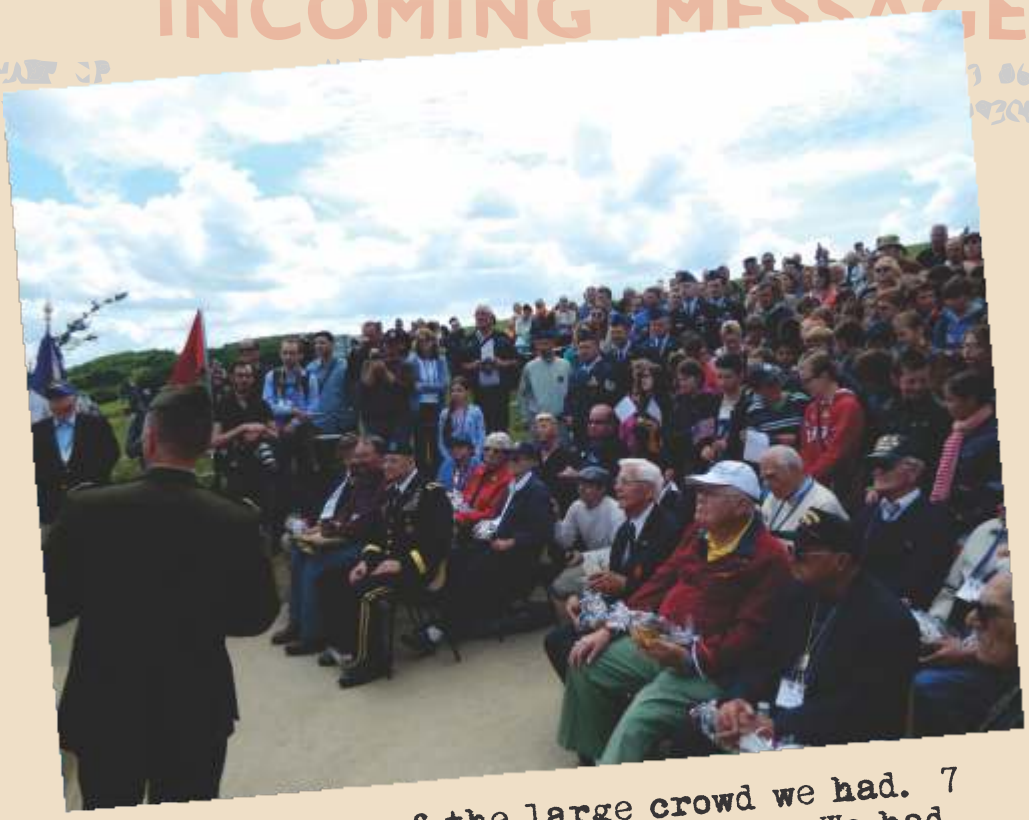

An overview of the large crowd we had. 7 Normandy veterans are up front. We had approx 250 people at the event almost all them local villagers who came to show their support. The ceremony was honored to have 30 local young children all place individual flowers on the memorial.



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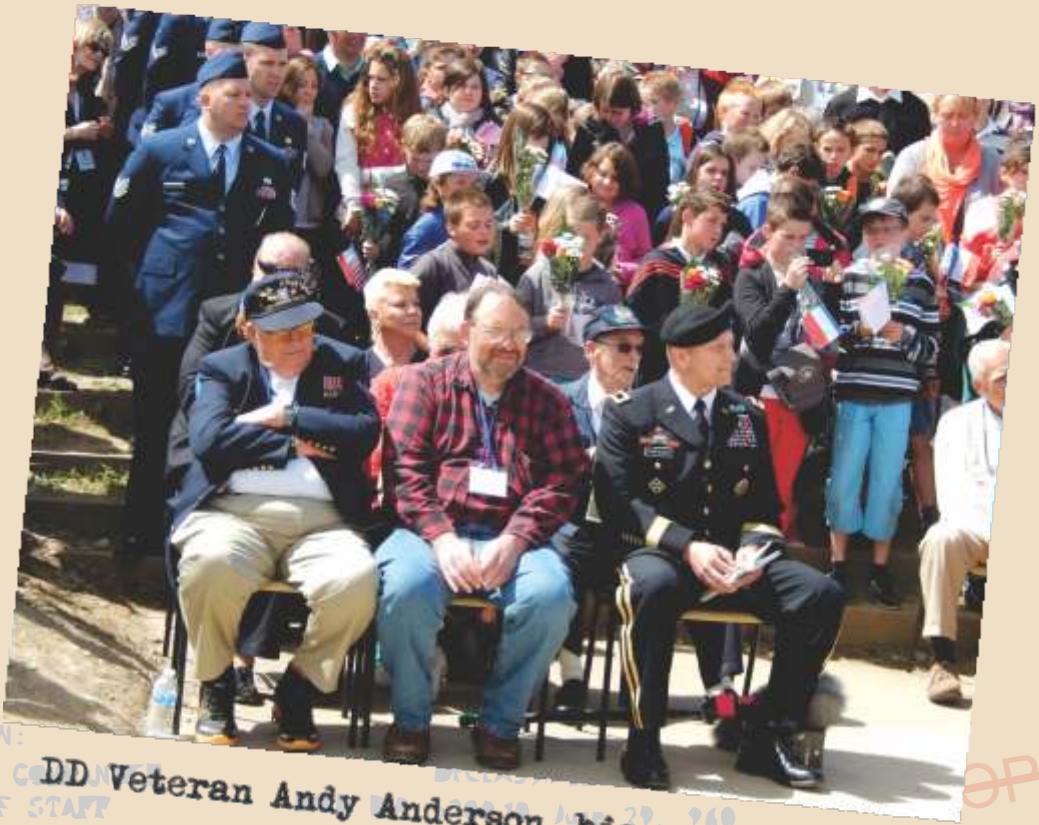
Dday Veteran Andy Anderson thanks Brigadier General Funkhouser for coming and talking about the history of the Army Engineers.



DD Veteran Andy Anderson, his son, and Bgen Funkhouser.

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A group shot of all the volunteers who scrubbed, drove, escorted, cajoled, drilled, swept, raked, washed, shoveled, and cheered this project into existence in 48 short hours on the beach.



The French Standard Bearers who were present at the re-dedication.

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Our Normandy Leadership Team on the beach. L-R, Jeff, Yves, Joe, Francois, and Jibs.

This restoration would not have possible without the following who graciously donated their services and time:

TSgt J. D. Bybee, and the mighty Airmen of the 703d MUNSS CC, Volkel AB, The Netherlands

Todd Bailey, 4M3D Design Studio

Tom Bryan, President, 348th Association

Ethan Darby, Trigard Memorial Products, Danville, IL

Brian Fehringer, Fehringer Machining, Duncan, NE

Francois Lienher, Lienher SA, Switzerland

Marble Machine, Danville, IL

Joe Winslow, President, Gorget, Inc.

For more information please contact:

Major S. Joseph Winslow USMCR(Ret.)
Washington, DC,
(469) 363-0651

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