

BROOKLYN_BORN

[Change Banner Image](#)**154,944**
SparkPoints[Info](#)[Photos](#)[Feed](#)[Blogs](#)[Awards](#)[More](#)

They Gave Up Their Collective Future to Ensure Ours

Thursday, April 30, 2015



I live in Bedford, VA. It's the site of the National D-Day Memorial, since this little town lost more men per capita than any other place on June 6, 1944. So the Normandy Beaches were our primary destination after leaving the Czech Republic.

We paid our respects at the individual graves of "The Bedford Boys." Twelve are still buried here in the American Cemetery. The remains of 10 others were taken home to family plots.

D-Day is a tragic part of our town's history, but nearly 10,000 men (American, British, Canadian) died that day to liberate people they didn't even know. Free French forces and men from other occupied countries also joined the assault. French civilians suffered terrible loss as well. Over 18,000 died during the invasion.

Omaha Beach was the most well-known to us, but we did our research and wanted to visit ALL the landing sites. A short tour wouldn't be enough. We spent 2 long days walking the beautiful seashore where once ordinary men changed history.

[Add a Blog Entry](#)

See Today's Featured Member Blog Posts

More Blogs by BROOKLYN_BORN

[Now I can add one more event to my "Anniversary Dates" to forget - 6/7/2021](#)

[Avoiding Our Wedding Anniversary - 6/4/2021](#)

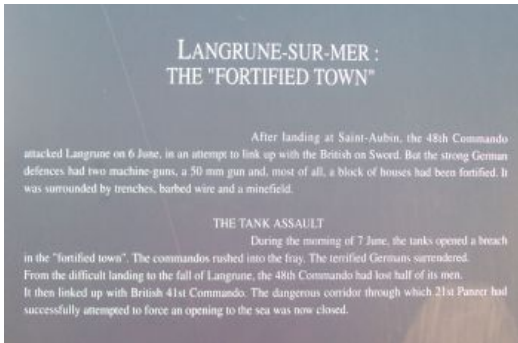
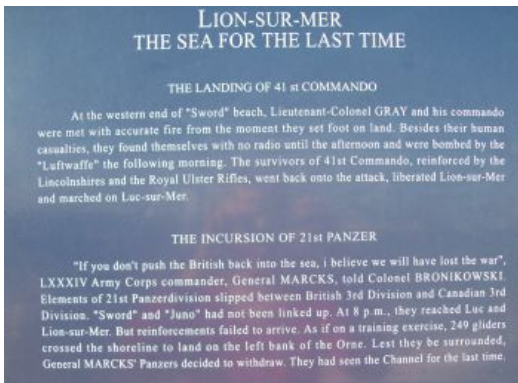
[Multitasking for Safety – Plus Remembrance and Reflection - 6/1/2021](#)

[Taps Across America – The National Moment of Remembrance - Monday 5/31/21 3PM - 5/30/2021](#)

[View All >](#)



From Sword Beach to Juno to Gold to Omaha to Utah we stopped to read the account of men who stormed ashore on that day.



The bunkers and gun emplacements they faced still stand in silent testimony to their sacrifice.



Some British ingenuity

On June 6th, 1944, the LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry) streamed out on the beach of Bernières - Juno sector - a large number of soldiers carrying with them surprising pieces of equipment: bicycles. These bicycles enabled the soldiers to advance more quickly on the country roads inland following their assault on the beaches.

Association Bernières Optique Nouvelle mai 2014

Many monuments contain the names of those who died there. The Canadian memorial allows you to scan each name and get information about the man. Technology in the service of history.



Walking on the sand was difficult especially where the path was steep. Imagine what it was like with the enemy in places like this determined to stop you



And you were carrying 75 pounds of gear on your back.



Looking Eastward from the high ground



And looking west



THE LONGUES BATTERY :
A THREAT TO GOLD AND OMAHA

A POWERFUL BATTERY OF THE KRIEGSMARINE

It was built in the beginning of the year 1944. Four 152 mm guns, with a range of over twelve miles, could threaten the landing fleet off Gold and Omaha as well as the beaches themselves. Layers of earth, on an inclined plane, rested on the piers or side walls. They were designed to cushion the work against bomb impacts, to prevent it from slipping over in the event of a near miss, and to conceal the blockhouses.

The range-finding post was three hundred yards ahead, on the cliff edge. Like the large bunker at Onitroham, it was fitted with a telemetric aiming device. The whole arrangement was defended by machine-gun nests, "Tobruks" (concrete niches mounted with a weapon or a tank turret), barbed wire and mines.

A HEAVY ARTILLERY BATTLE

In the night of 5 to 6 June, the Allies spilled a thousand tons of bombs onto the battery, with considerable accuracy, but to no great effect. At dawn, the battery engaged in an artillery duel with the cruiser "Arkansas", with the French ships "Georges-Leygues" and "Montcalm" in support. It stopped firing, then trained its guns on the "Belolo", headquarters ship of 3rd Infantry, which was forced to retire. The cruiser "Ajax" replied. Again the battery fell silent, until the afternoon, when it resumed firing on the beaches at Colleville and Amélie.

Late in the evening, the "Arkansas", the "Georges-Leygues" and the "Montcalm" knocked out the battery once and for all. The naval artillery had demonstrated its superiority over land-based guns, and also over the bomber aircraft.

On the morning of 7 June, the battery was occupied by British soldiers and the garrison was taken prisoner without a fight.

These fearsome structures continue for miles





The climb to this monument was particularly steep



Once at the top we realized that there was easier access for tourists if we had approached from the other side.



Oh well, the path we took added to the appreciation of what those men accomplished coming up from the beach under fire.

Omaha Beach



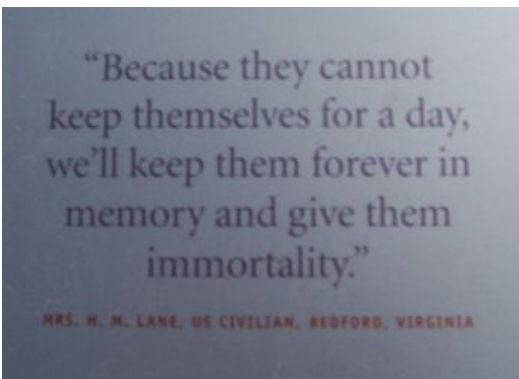
Omaha Beach is 5 miles wide. This is the location "at the edge of the western cliffs" where the Bedford Boys landed and the path to fight their way inland.



Then we drove westward to Pointe du Hoc where the Rangers scaled a cliff on rope ladders to take out the guns threatening Omaha Beach. Of the 225 Rangers who assaulted this position only 90 survived.



Even here there was a Bedford connection. Although the Bedford unit wasn't involved, at the memorial I discovered this quote from a Bedford woman, right between quotes of Eisenhower and Churchill.



The defensive fortifications at the top of the cliff are unbelievable. Tourists can now walk around and inside them.



Accessing the last landing site Utah Beach required a drive of several miles through the countryside. Not many tourists visit here, perhaps because this landing had the fewest casualties or maybe because it was never the subject of a movie. However, their sacrifice is no less important





Finally we visited several towns whose citizens endured so much, first from the occupation and later from the bombing of the allies trying to dislodge the Nazis from their defensive positions.

This is the church of Sainte Mere Eglise where so many American paratroopers died the night before the landing on the beach. The story of the soldier who landed on the tower and survived by pretending to be dead is true and was told in the 1962 movie "The Longest Day."



Ironically, the first movie DH & I saw together was "The Longest Day."

Now 52 years later we have spent 2 of our longest days walking the ground where it all happened. Many of the monuments say "Lest We Forget." There's no way I could forget this now.

[Edit Blog Entry](#) | [Delete Blog Entry](#)

Share This Post With Others

[Report Inappropriate Blog](#)

Member Comments About This Blog Post



CD9234910

No indeed, I think that it is impossible to forget after having seen all the beaches and the nearby towns where D-Day occurred. For me the memory that will always stay on my mind (I was surprised not to see it in your pictures) is hills after hills of white crosses, as far as the eye can see. Standing there, I felt overwhelmed more than ever before in my life, and so grateful. Is 'invasion' the way Americans refer to it? I found it shocking. No French person would ever call the liberation from our Allies friends an invasion... Here we always call it 'Le Débarquement' (the landing). The invasion was the Nazis' arrival 4 years before.

The right name for the village is Sainte Mère l'Eglise.



I am sure it is very difficult to remember and write all these unknown names.

2150 days ago

**MARYJEANSL**

My father was one of those men. He was a jumpmaster on D-Day. I cry every time I read about these soldiers and their bravery and their sacrifices. I have never been to Normandy. Someday I hope to go there as you have. Thank you so much for posting this!
2227 days ago

**LIVEDAILY**

Thank you for sharing this. It's sad that so many young people today have absolutely no idea of what transpired during WWII.



2231 days ago

**MISCHAKEO**

Your blog is an excellent tribute to those heroic soldiers. I loved your pictures and comments.
2232 days ago

**SUBMOM2**

Thanks for sharing these photos. Your beautiful tribute keeps the memory of those young men alive.
2233 days ago

**DOVESEYES**

wonderful thanks
2233 days ago


**WATERMELLEN**

This is a touching tribute to a heroic sacrifice by so many brave soldiers.
2233 days ago

**ONEKIDSMOM**

Sad, somber, appropriately honored. And it brings to my mind that the world is still at war... different wars, but it seems that nowadays there is always armed conflict somewhere, and we have gold stars cropping up on license plates from recent losses. Many folks seem to forget that people are serving NOW. Service members are STILL making that ultimate sacrifice, or losing limbs, or coming home with invisible scars of having been raised "gently" and then seeing what the world is like far from their comfortable first world upbringing.

Blessings on the souls of those who died there, and those who are still serving. And may the

families of those lost be comforted. Under whatever flag they served.  Lives cut short remind us how precious life *is*... may we live it with honor.

2233 days ago

**CD4114015**

THANK YOU!

SO much for sharing this. It was awesome and moved me to tears. You are so right. My dad was not one of these young men, but he did fight in the war and even though he lived a long life to 78 I still miss him horribly. Those soldiers had class and honor and good in them



2233 days ago

**KRISZTA11**

Thank you for sharing.
Our history was changed for the better by the sacrifice of these young men.
How peaceful and beautiful is the beach now...
2233 days ago

**PHOENIX1949**

THANK YOU!

2233 days ago

TERI-RIFIC

It brought tears to my eyes to read this and see the pictures. My husband and I should definitely go sometime. I didn't know that about Bedford. I love America. America IS exceptional.
2233 days ago



SPINNINGJW

Thank you for sharing.
2233 days ago



GINIEMIE

I visited some of those sites as an 18 yr old, then again with students in 2005 we went to Omaha beach and a few war museums as well as the American Cemetery. Some of my girls had a melt down when they saw the evidence of the destruction of our GI's. It was a rough day on our teens, but I can assure you we will NOT forget. Maman was in the Belgian underground and my dad participated in the Battle of the Bulge.... So many died for our freedom and the freedom of



Well Said!    
others.   

2233 days ago



WALLAHALLA

Sometimes we are way too glib about the sacrifices others have made for our freedom. Great blog.
2233 days ago



PHEBESS

A sad blog, but I'm glad you were able to visit these sites.
2233 days ago



FORZACHANDMATT

This is soon beautiful - thanks for sharing your trek - it is especially significant to me because my Great Uncle Arnold died on D-day and my mom (ARNA) was named after him and she passed away on Dec 14, 2014 - I hope to visit some of these places someday - my son is going to a sleepaway camp in Clover, VA this summer, so maybe I'll go to Bedford, VA on the way to bringing him to camp



2233 days ago



WUMPASTAR

Wow! Thanks so much for sharing. What incredible two days that must have been. I dream of doing the same.
2233 days ago



JANETRW50

What a wonderful blog. Thank you so much for sharing the story and the pictures. How wonderful that the heroics of that time are captured for future generations and as the quote says, gives those brave people, immortality.
2233 days ago



BOB5148

Thanks so much for the pictures and seeing the monuments. Thanks again
2233 days ago



SYLPHINPROGRESS



Thank you for your moving account of your visit. That you wrote it on April 30 doesn't go unnoticed.
2233 days ago



Comment edited on: 4/30/2015 9:25:57 AM



NEPTUNE1939

AWESOME  
2233 days ago



1HAPPYSPIRIT

Thanks for sharing! For those of us with numerous family members as veterans, we appreciate your efforts in paying respect to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Believe me when I say, there is nothing like losing a family member in warfare to appreciate one's



freedom. 
2233 days ago

Add Your Comment to the Blog Post

Leave encouragement, a question, or anything else relevant to this post. All blog comments must abide by SparkPeople's [Community Guidelines](#).

Subscribe to this blog

ADD AN EMOTICON

SPELL CHECK

Post Comment

Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.