



Let's plant a *75-year-old tree*

THE AMAZING THING ABOUT HISTORY is that it is always there to look back on, learn from and ... be inspired by.

The hard part is that with our fast-paced, whirling world, what's happening in 30 minutes right now seems much bigger than focusing on something that happened 75 years ago.

So, when does history get centre stage? What about the millions of men and women who gave everything they had for the freedom of a dominated continent — and fears of a dominated world?

What about the single mothers and the orphaned children? What about living every day in a war-torn city, scared to death about whether you will see the next? What about the younger brother or sister back home in Canada left wondering whether if they would ever see their family members, their role models, again?

How can we talk to, and really educate, the young Canadian minds of today of the sacrifice and global citizenship shown by so many from just a few generations before; many of whom have direct family lineage to one of the 'greatest generation'?

A huge misconception in today's culture is that the Second World War was fought by a bunch of old men who went over, and it happened, and it's done. It's

no longer relevant and that is, sadly, end of story.

Of course, that could not be farther from the truth.

Let's change that. Let's move away from doom and gloom and focus on hope and dedication.

Let's focus on the fact that millions of people were being oppressed and that young men and women from around the globe bound together that culminated in what was, and still is, the most complex military operation in history.

There is a saying that the best time to plant a tree was 50 years ago, but the second best time is now.

There is some planting to be done in the minds of today's young men and women. To teach them about holding onto hope, rock-solid dedication and fighting for the person beside you.

This is the story of Operation Overlord — D-Day — which took place in the early morning of June 6, 1944. It involved members from 12 Allied nations, including Canada with an honorably substantial role, and was the beginning of the end of Hitler's reign over continental Europe.

— *A special 75th anniversary of D-Day commemorative project of The Hamilton Spectator and The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum*



Countdown to D-DAY

The famous photo as the landing craft's door goes down and Canadian troops begin their assault on Fortress Europe in Normandy France, 75 years ago.



PART 1 OF 8

Next week: The Canadian Objective
June 6, 2019, will be the 75th anniversary of D-Day, one of the monumental days in human history. It was one that changed the course of the world, signalled the beginning of the end of the Second World War and shaped the image of Canada as a power on the world stage. Hamilton will pay tribute to all D-Day veterans with a one-of-a-kind gala at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum on June 1, featuring the World Famous Glenn Miller Orchestra. Today, The Spectator, in conjunction with Newspapers In Education, begins an 8-week countdown to D-Day, with a look at what Operation Overlord was, and what was at stake.

How the world turned on a single day

The stakes couldn't have been higher as morning dawned on June 6, 1944

ALEX DAY

"They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate."

— U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On Sept. 1, 1939 — in a bid to establish a 'Third Reich' — Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany began to invade the countries of Europe in sweeping fashion. His 'Blitzkrieg' attacks passed through shocked and helpless defences like a rolling fog. By early 1941, only the British Isles had yet to fall.

Nearly a year and a half went by before any attempt could be made to land a small invasion force on the coast of France to fight back.

On Aug. 19, 1942, a force primarily made up of Canadians — including the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry — attempted to land at the French port of Dieppe in what was codenamed Operation Jubilee.

Of the 4,963 young men who set out for the operation, 2,210 returned and a total of 3,367 were listed as casu-

alties with 1,946 taken prisoner. Nine hundred and sixteen died. The RHLI lost 197, the second highest casualty total among Canadian Army units, according to Veterans Affairs Canada.

The defeat at Dieppe made two things painfully, deadly obvious. First, there was much to learn to be able to sustain any break in German defences, which was vital in order to seize and hold a swath of land. Second, the risk to human life, resources and morale was very real and, even more so, difficult to rebound from.

Unknown to the world — including the common citizens of Germany — Hitler was systematically exterminating every Jewish person in Europe. He craved the extinction of the entire religion. In the end, he would kill more than six million Jewish men, women and children, including approximately three million Polish-Jews alone.

For those under his powerful heel, there was no end in sight.

Four and a half years after the start of war — and nearly two full years since the ill-fated landings at Dieppe — the Allied powers were finally able to try again at piercing the armoured wall lining the coast of France.

This attempt would include more than 150,000 young men and women, dwarfing the Dieppe invasion force in size and scale with troops from the



MIKE LARGE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Canadian veteran on Juno Beach, Courseulles-sur-Mer, France, on the 60th anniversary the of D-Day landings in 2004.

United Kingdom, United States and Canada.

It was codenamed Operation Overlord, and D-Day — the secretive date marked for the launching of the invasion — was scheduled for June 5, 1944.

The operation was comprised of naval, ground-based and airborne operations that were all designed around supporting one another and cutting off Nazi reinforcement to the five target beaches along the coast of Normandy, France.

Much to the concern of Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, early June had been plagued with extremely inclement weather. So much so that he decided to postpone the June 5 invasion until a weather window produced itself in the upcoming weeks.

At the last moment, he decided to risk it all on an opening in the storms on early June 6.

"This operation is not being planned with any alternatives. This operation is planned as a victory, and that's the way it's going to be. We're going down there, and we're throwing everything we have into it, and we're going to make it a success," he said.

If successful, the Allies would have a foothold to thrust themselves in a

bid to take back Europe. Not only that, but it would mark a second victory for the Allies, just two days after the liberation of Rome in Italy and be a much-needed sign of hope for a world desperately awaiting a miracle. It could be the beginning of the end of the Second World War.

If turned back, the Allies would have been faced with an unfathomable hole from which to climb. Losses of astronomical proportions would be definite. It would take years to be able to re-train and re-arm a fighting force of that size. Hitler could focus on Italy again, or focus entirely on the western front. He would no longer have to worry about the threat of a two-pronged attack. He could continue making strides in weapons innovations and would remain unopposed in his carrying out of his diabolical "Final Solution."

Fast-forward, 75 years later. We know how the events unfolded on, above and around the shores of Normandy on June 6, 1944. But, in those moments, not a single person in the world knew what was going to happen.

Those brave men did not just land on the beaches of France, they landed themselves in history as part of the most complex military operations to ever take place. The operation undoubtedly led to the end of the war in Europe — not even a year later in May 1945 — and the liberation of millions of people whose gratitude is just as strong today as it was three-quarters of a century ago.

Hitler's rain of V-2 rockets on England ended and the Nazi's dream of developing an atomic bomb was thwarted. France, Holland, Belgium — all of western Europe — rejoiced.

And there's no telling how many more innocent Jews were saved.

"It was unknowable then, but so much of the progress that would define the 20th century, on both sides of the Atlantic, came down to the battle for a slice of beach only 6 miles long and 2 miles wide."

— U.S. President Barack Obama. June 6, 2009.

Alex Day is a member of the D-Day Commemorative Gala Committee, and an employee of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

Canadian troops land on the beachhead in Normandy, France, in June 1944 shortly after the D-Day invasion. On a chilly, grey morning 75 years ago, a few boatloads of scared, cold, often seasick young Canadians charged ashore on a windswept French beach and helped make history.



DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE CANADIAN PRESS



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Remembering Our Past

The 75th Anniversary of D-Day

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Countdown to D-DAY

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTATOR'S NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM

From the air and the sea, the Canadians came

ALEX DAY

“There is going to be chaos and confusion and it’ll never be otherwise. You’re going to require leadership and initiative.”

— **Blake Heathcote, Testaments of Honour**

Those were the words of advice given to Sgt. Andy Anderson and the other officers of 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion by their brigadier-general in the hours leading up to their jump.

It’s not to say that Allied intelligence was far off in their findings leading up to June 6, 1944, but to Sgt. Anderson and the brave young men beside him, that sentence was the most accurate piece of information they’d be given.

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion helped make up the approximately 30,000 Canadians who were in Britain being prepared for Operation Overlord. Canada had been tasked with securing a plot of beachhead between the French towns of Courseulles to Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, code-named “Juno Beach.”

“The Canadian invasion forces had spent years in Britain training for the task. They had tried very hard not to think of what lay ahead. It was difficult to realize the enormity of what we would be attempting. I was part of that force. However, when we started our assault training on the south of England and in Scotland, we began to realize what loomed before us. Untried troops would dare to set foot in Hitler’s Europe. Everyday while in Britain, we heard stories of the heavily fortified French coast which the Germans, in four years with slave labour had turned into a continuous system of guns, pillboxes, mines, barbed wire and on the beaches, underwater pilings, some loaded with explosives waiting to blow up the assault crafts. It was a terrifying picture. The men of the infantry and tank regiments chosen for the invasion simply had to disregard what lay ahead for them



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Lt.-Commander D.W. Piers, commanding officer of the HMCS Algonquin, addresses his crew on the way to Juno Beach on June 6, 1944.

across the channel. We just dug in, trained harder, determined to do what some were saying would be impossible.”

— **Cliff Chadderton, Royal Winnipeg Rifles from his documentary ‘Juno Beach to Caen.’**

The Canadian effort on D-Day could be broken down into four groups — navy, air force, infantry and the airborne paratroopers — and they all had their own specific objectives.

In the hours leading up to the main landings, the Royal Canadian Navy swept for mines in the waters approaching the five target beaches, allowing a safer approach for the corvettes and landing craft.

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion was being dropped in behind enemy lines from C-47 Dakotas and on Horsa gliders. They were tasked with securing bridges east of the beach and to hinder any sort of reinforcement attempt that was to be

made by the Germans.

Troops with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division’s made up the main invasion force with H-Hour (the time set for the landings of the first assault wave) scheduled for 0745 hours. Their objectives were to establish a beachhead, secure three coastal towns and then advance inland in order to link up with the progressing forces from the other beaches. The Canadian soldiers pushed farther inland than any other company from any of the other beaches.

The Royal Canadian Air Force flew alongside the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force and provided air cover and fire support for the invasion force. Spitfire fighters kept the German Luftwaffe pilots away from bombers and ground troops while Typhoon attack aircraft took out armoured divisions entrenched along the coast.

According to The Loyal Edmonton



PART 2 OF 8

Next week: Hamilton’s General, Harry Crerar

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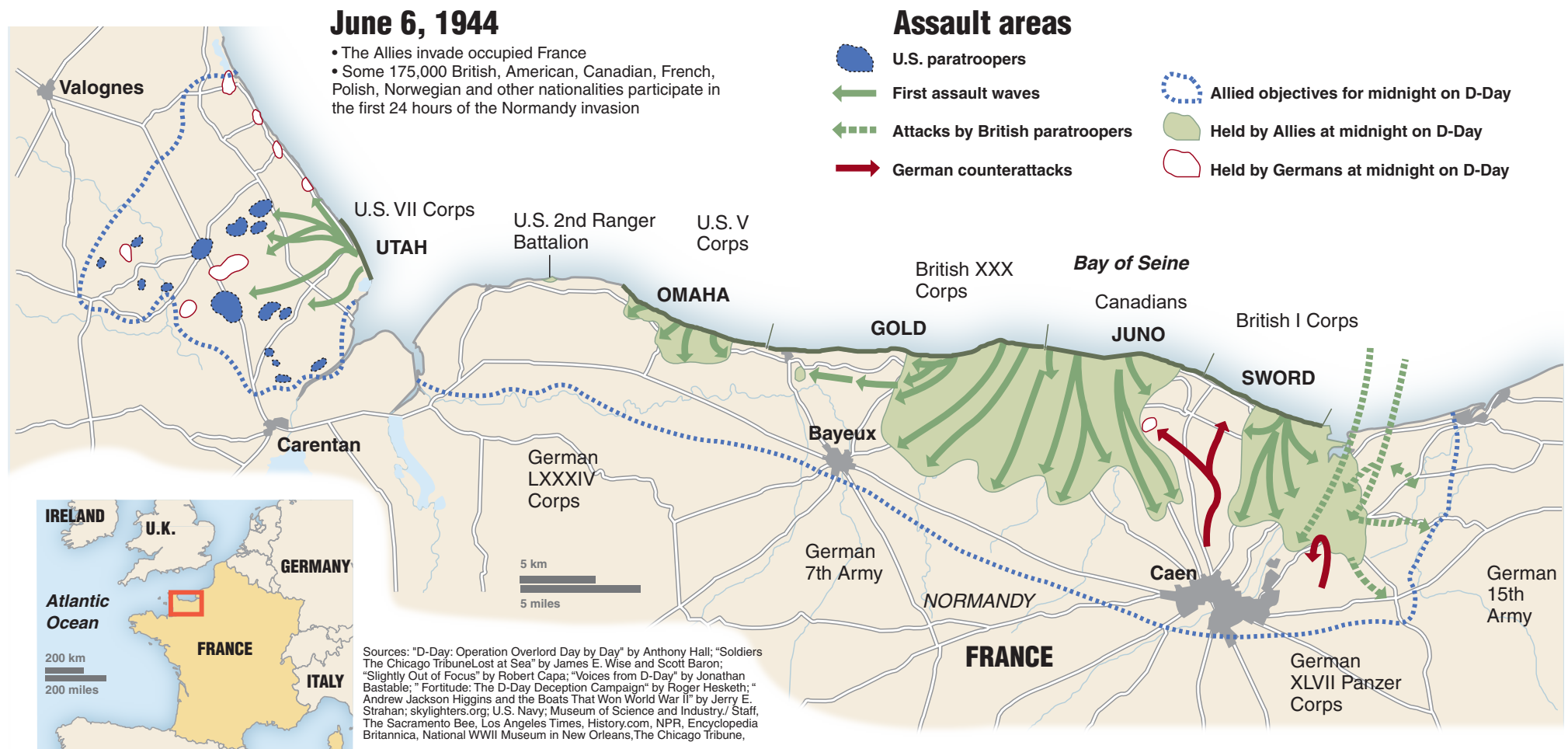
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Regiment Military Museum, “RCAF Bomber Group 6, composed of 14 RCAF squadrons, attacked several key strategic targets. With railways, bridges and fuel and ammunition depots damaged or destroyed, the German forces were unable to launch an effective counterattack against the Allied forces on the beaches of Normandy.”

By the morning of June 7, nearly 14,000 Canadians landed on or had been dropped into Normandy. But their success came at a price. There were 1,074 casualties with 359 of those young lives lost.

Alex Day is a member of the D-Day Commemorative Gala Committee, and an employee of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

D-Day: The Allies invade Europe



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HAMILTON SPECTATOR



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Count down to D-DAY

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTATOR'S NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM

The general who showed Canada the way

The Canadian Press

When General Harry Crerar — the “quiet man who got things done” — died at the age of 76 in Ottawa in April 1965, he was hailed as the most distinguished military leader Canada had ever produced.

A Hamilton native, Gen. Crerar was the first Canadian to be promoted to general while serving at the battlefield and the first to command a full-fledged Canadian army in the field.

The stern-faced, soft spoken general, who left Hamilton in his early 20s, won wide acclaim for the Canadian Army’s dramatic drive from Normandy along the Channel coast into Belgium, Holland and Germany during the Allied victory campaign that ended the Second World War.

It capped a military career that began at the Royal Military College in Kingston where he graduated in 1909. He spent several years as a civil engineer with Ontario Hydro, but at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, he went overseas as an artillery captain. He was in the Battle of Ypres where the first gas attack in history failed to crack the Canadian front. Rising rapidly through artillery command posts, he was a lieutenant-colonel and corps counter-battery officer when the Great War ended.

In the interval between the wars, he served in various headquarters roles, attending the 1932 Geneva Disarmament Conference and the Imperial Conference of 1937. He rose to full colonel in 1938, commanding the RMC in Kingston. A month after the Second World War began, he was made a brigadier and sent to London to plan for the arrival of the 1st Canadian Division. In July 1940, he returned to Ottawa as chief of the general staff and was promoted to lieutenant-general in 1941.

Gen. Crerar took a step down in rank later that year to go overseas again as commander of the 2nd Canadian Division then training in England. He explained to a friend: “I must get away from a desk. I must get overseas, for that is where I belong.”

Soon he was commanding the 1st Canadian Corps, and back at lieutenant-general in rank. It was the 2nd Division of this corps that carried out the disastrous 1942 raid on Dieppe, an operation that he always defended as an essential prelude to the D-Day operation of 1944.

In the spring of 1944, Gen. Crerar was returned to England, succeeding Gen. McNaughton as commander of the Canadian Army.

Two weeks after D-Day, Gen. Crerar arrived in Normandy and began forming the 1st Canadian Army for its special task of clearing the coast of northwest Europe. He made his military reputation — and Canada’s — in the bitter months of struggle toward Germany.

In the climatic attack across the Rhine in February 1945, he had more than 500,000 men under his command, including eight British divisions sent to bolster the three Canadian divisions. By early March, he had turned the Siegfried Line and cleared the west bank of the lower Rhine in



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, right, with General Harry Crerar, commanding Canadian First Army, watch a demonstration by Canadian troops during his visit to the Canadian sector on Dec. 19, 1944.

an operation that received high praise from Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander.

Eisenhower later described him as a humble leader who was much less flamboyant than his contemporaries, George Patton and Bernard Montgomery: “He was not one to seek the limelight or command headlines. He was one of those great souls whose only ambition was to do his duty to his troops and to his country.”

Gen. Crerar once summarized his personal philosophy of generalship: “Lead always, drive rarely, but when you must, drive hard.”

On his return to Ottawa in August 1945, thousands welcomed him on Parliament Hill, where, it was reported, he received one of the greatest ovations in the country’s history.

About 20,000 people turned out for a civic ceremony and parade in Hamilton in 1946. He is remembered in his home town with a neighbourhood, street and a park named in his honour.

—with files from *The Hamilton Spectator* archives.



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

General Crerar on the cover of *Time* Magazine on Sept. 18, 1944.



PART 3 OF 8

Next week: The Build Up to D-Day
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CANADIAN ARMY OVERSEAS PHOTO

Gen. Harry Crerar, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Canadian Army Overseas, drives his own Jeep to see Canadians in action shortly after he set up his headquarters in France after D-Day.



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Thanks to the generous donations of the gala sponsors, tickets for all current or past member of the Canadian Forces are half price, including a guest. For details, please contact Emily Millar at emillar@warplane.com or 905-679-4183, ext. 253. To purchase tickets and for more information, visit warplane.com or call **905-679-4183**



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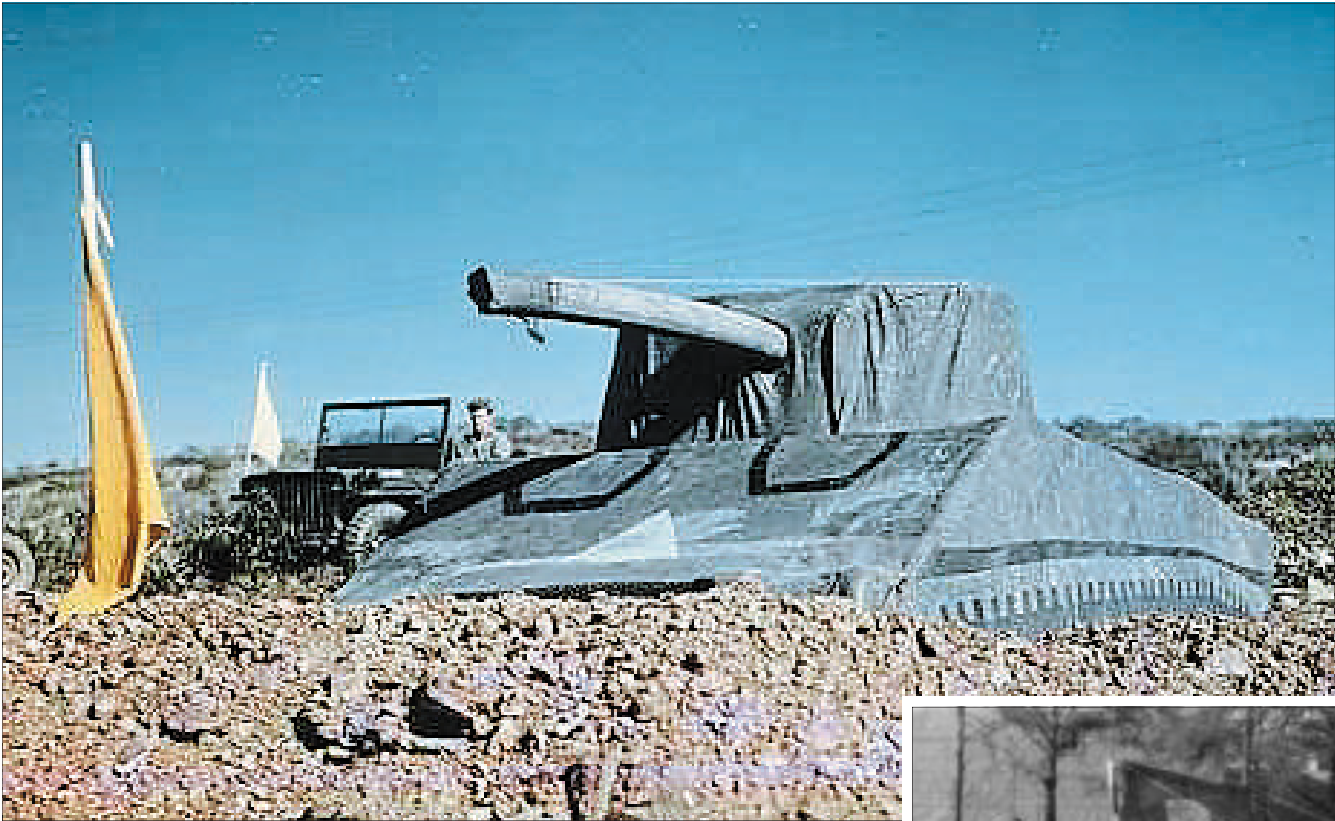
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Countdown to D-DAY

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTATOR'S NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION PROGRAM



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

It took a Bodyguard and some Fortitude

How deception played a key role in the success of the D-Day invasion

KEN LLOYD

Where was the enemy?

Adolf Hitler had boasted his Panzer attack would drive the Allies into the sea when the inevitable invasion began. It was now the day after D-Day, there was no massive counter attack, and with each hour, more Allied reinforcements landed.

Why?

The Panzers were held back through an Allied deception plan called Operation Bodyguard.

Against the Allies was a German Army of 300 Divisions with 58 Divisions in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Hitler had his favourite Field Marshal, Erwin Rommel, defending Normandy and Brittany.

In 1943, Rommel began adding pillboxes; gun emplacements; beach obstacles, and posts stuck into possible glider landing fields. The five infantry divisions holding the coastal defences were stiffened with experienced leaders. Rommel took command of three of the nine Panzer divisions of the counterattack force although only one of the Panzer Divisions was close to Normandy.

Rommel said: "The war will be won or lost on the beaches. We will have one chance to stop the enemy and that is while he's in the water struggling ashore. The first 24 hours of the invasion will be decisive ... for the Allies as well as Germany. It will be the longest day."

At the Tehran conference in 1943, Churchill outlined the importance of deception in the planning for an invasion of Europe and for it to be controlled at the highest command level. The Allies already had successful deceptions as in August 1942 when a haversack of fake mine fields found by Rommel's troops helped defeat him at Alam el Halfa. In July 1943, fake plans placed on a corpse (Opera-

tion Mincemeat) showed that the expected invasion of Sicily was actually an invasion of Greece and Salonika, just as Hitler expected.

Fake Army camps, and dummy tanks were built in Egypt and false radio signals were sent to complete the deception. At the time, Churchill is reputed to have said, "Everyone but a bloody fool would know it's Sicily."

Mussolini agreed with Churchill. Hitler did not agree and moved 1st Panzer Division from France to Salonika; two Panzer Divisions from the Eastern Front to the Balkans and sent Rommel to defend Salonika.

The Allied invasion of Sicily was a success. It was agreed that Deception plans for D-Day would be code named Operation Bodyguard and co-ordinated at the High Command level.

Operation Bodyguard was built around 35 interlinked plans to build such creditable threats that Hitler could not counter one threat without exposing another. By mixing real and false threats, including an Allied invasion of Norway, attacks across the Black Sea into Rumania and into the Balkans; an invasion of the French Riviera; attacks into the Bordeaux region of France and a main Allied invasion into Pas de Calais the Allies could deceive Hitler and conceal Operation Overlord.

The most important operation was Fortitude.

Fortitude North: An allied invasion of Norway, then through neutral Sweden, an invasion of Denmark and an attack against the Reich into Berlin.

Fortitude South: An allied invasion of France through the Pas de Calais with a diversion invasion in Normandy to draw the defenders from the Pas de Calais.

The deception plan had to agree with Hitler's opinion and be believable and credible.

Intelligence was collected through many sources, mainly through listening to enemy radio transmissions; breaking enemy codes; sending spies to report what was happening and

taking photographs from the air or the from the sea.

To make the deception work, the plan had to involve different sources of information all saying the same thing.

It then had to be checked to see if the enemy believed the deception. Through Ultra, the Allies could read Hitler's command teleprinter network and confirm whether the deception plan was being believed.

The Allied command structure in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEPF) co-ordinated all the Intelligence agencies under the Committee of Special Means (CSM). This ensured that all the different groups were co-ordinated with each fake plan and had the authority to make their part happen.

The Nazi command structure had power focused in one leader. Hitler created multiple separate and competing agencies providing different pieces of information for his approval and direction.

Fortitude North created a fictitious 4th Army in Scotland that was preparing to invade Norway.

General Sir Andrew Thorne, who had previously served as military attaché in Berlin and was well known to the German High Command, would be the commander. Scotland was difficult for German reconnaissance planes, so the deception relied upon false radio messages creating a complete army that could be listened to and tracked by the German B-Dienst Intelligence.

The codes used were low level and known to have been previously decoded by the Germans. German double agents who had agreed to work for the Allies were actively sending reports of fictional troop movements and information on the 4th Army to their handlers in the German Abwehr.

Fortitude South created the fake 1st U.S. Army Group in southeast

It took a fake army of real troops and rubber tanks and guns to help fool Nazi leaders in the days before, and even after, D-Day.



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Operation Fortitude South featured a fake army under the command of Gen. George Patton, as well as dummy tanks and guns.



PART 4 OF 8

Next week: The Atlantic Wall

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England preparing to invade the Pas de Calais. This was commanded by General George Patton, considered by the German command as the natural commander for the invasion.

The deception plan was similar to that in Fortitude North but with the complication that the deployment could easily be observed by air and coastal reconnaissance.

Dummy tank parks, army camps, with fake airfields created a believable and credible invasion force against the Pas de Calais.

Double agents were very successful in Fortitude South.

On May 30, Hitler informed the Japanese Ambassador, General Hiroshi Baron Oshima, that although there might be diversionary attacks in Normandy or the Netherlands, the main invasion would be in the Pas de Calais.

For Hitler and his High command, the information from reliable Abwehr Agents across Europe; Signals Intelligence from Y stations; crypto analysis units; and aerial photo reconnaissance all identified the Pas de Calais as the main invasion site.

Perhaps, the best judgment as to whether the D-Day Deception plan worked are the words of General Omar Bradley who wrote to his supreme commander General Eisenhower: "Operation Fortitude ... was responsible for containing a minimum of 20 divisions in the Pas de Calais during the first crucial months of the invasion. The enemy was led to believe - and reacted to - a long inventory of opportune untruths, the largest, most effective and decisive of which was that (Neptune) itself was only the prelude to a major invasion in the Pas de Calais area ... Best testimony to the effectiveness with which this misinformation influenced the enemy's command decisions is the historic record of the enemy's committing his forces piecemeal-paralyzed into indecision in Normandy by the conviction that he had more to fear from Calais."

Ken Lloyd is a researcher and presenter of Canadian Military communications and code breaking vintagesignalsteam@gmail.com

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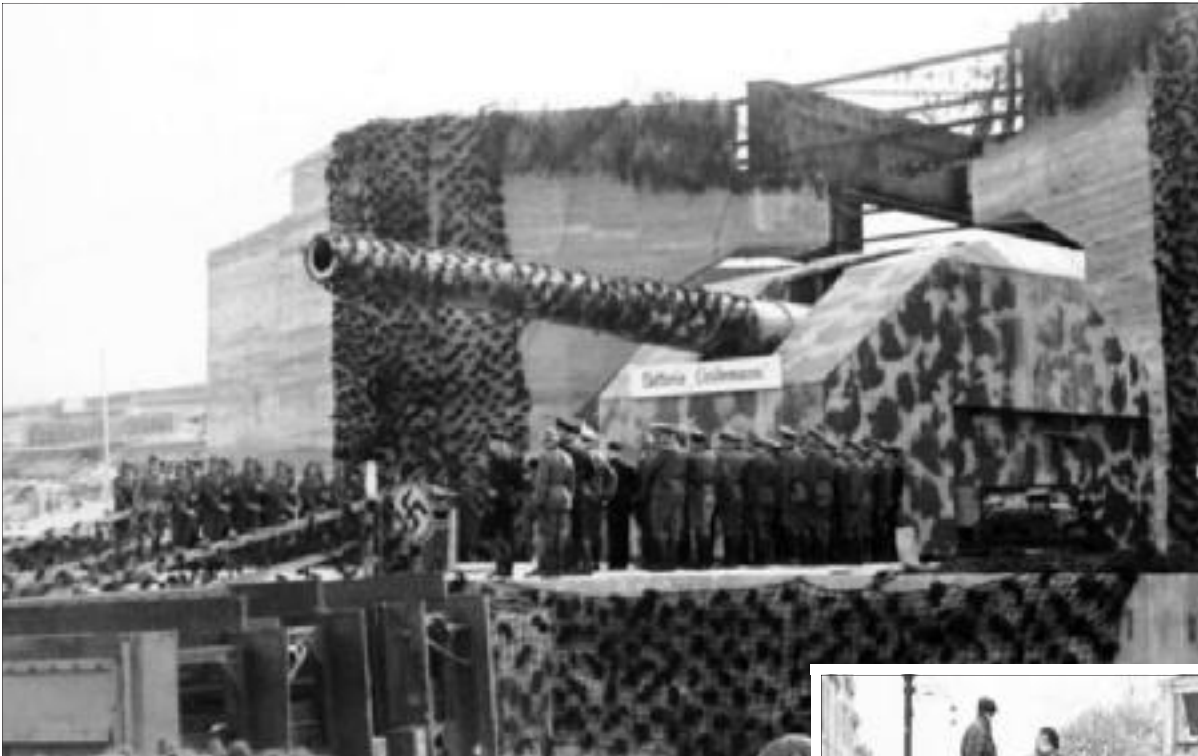
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Countdown to D-DAY

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTATOR'S NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION PROGRAM



THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR WWII PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

How to get a foothold in a fortress

Facing the Allies on D-Day was an Atlantic Wall bristling with deadly defences

ALEXANDER DAY

Seventeen million cubic metres of concrete and 1.2 million tonnes of steel, stretched ominously and continuously for 2,687 kilometres shaped the foundation of Adolph Hitler's Atlantic Wall, also known as his "Fortress Europe."

On March 23, 1942 — under Führer Directive No. 40 — construction was ordered on the defences along the European continent's coast with the Atlantic. Initially built around his Kriegsmarine's U-Boats, the fortifications eventually expanded to cover the coastline from Norway all the way to the Spanish border.

Nazi hierarchy concentrated on fixing defences along the assumed target of the French coast. So, in 1944 renowned and battle-tested, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, the famous "The Desert Fox" for his accomplishments in North Africa — was given the responsibility with overseeing and improving the fortifications by Hitler.

Rommel, too, firmly believed that beaches of France were the inevitable target for the Allies, and that the invasion had to be crushed right there. So, under his direction, in France alone, more than 6 million mines were planted.

Eventually, defences consisted of anti-tank and vehicle obstacles known as 'Rommel's Teeth' which were basically giant, jagged clusters of wood and steel with explosives attached and they were completely hidden

during high tide. Then the beaches were jammed full of landmines and barbed wire, ditches were dug, and anti-tank walls built followed by pillboxes housing murderous machine-gun nests with interlocking sightlines so that all the beachhead could be covered. Close behind were heavy artillery and anti-aircraft guns, armoured and infantry divisions and even a secondary line of heavy artillery to support the beachhead during an invasion, in hopes of delaying any advance until reinforcements could arrive.

The term "Fortress Europe" was warranted, and the fortress was formidable.

But, the Allies believed that victory could only be achieved by driving the occupying Nazi forces out, and that had to be done on land. Unfortunately, any sustained invasion would need a foothold to advance from and that meant that the Nazi assumptions of an inevitable beach landing — one, presumably close to England — were correct and well-founded.

So, the Allies had to apply a few tricks to improve their chances on D-Day.

They were innovative in their engineering of tactical vehicles that could be used to help them crack the defences they were going to face. 79th Armoured Division of the British Army and specialists from The Royal Engineers worked on what would become known as "Hobart's Funnies," which were tanks that were specially-modified to the problems that the more traditional tank would face.

The most famous of these was the Duplex Drive tank, or "Donald Duck", "Duck" or "DD" for short. These were amphibious tanks that used a flotation screen



Two of 'Hobart's Funnies,' a tank that could swim ashore like a duck and a tank that flailed away at hidden landmines.



Just some of the obstacles that lined the beaches of Normandy as men and machines tried to come ashore on June 6, 1944.

and two propellers to drive through the water. Other notable inventions that saw success on the frontlines were the Crab Mine-Clearing tank, the AVRE, and Crocodile Flame-Throwing tank.

The actual invasion force consisted of 156,000 American, British and Canadian troops that went on to storm 80 kilometres of the ferociously defended French



The imposing guns that fortified the Atlantic Wall from Norway to Spain, left, and one of the emplacements destroyed by the Canadians on D-Day in Normandy.



PART 5 OF 8

Next week: Talk on the Homefront

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in preparation for the landing crafts carrying the invasion force to their five designated beaches.

According to Veterans Affairs Canada, "some 14,000 Canadians began the assault along their sector of the coast — Juno Beach. Their mission was to secure the beach, and then push inland. Although only one Canadian unit reached its D-Day objective, the first line of the German defences had been smashed and Canadian troops had progressed further inland than any of their Allies. Hitler's Fortress Europe was cracked. It was a remarkable achievement, but it was costly. By the end of D-Day, 340 Canadians had given their lives."

It was the beginning of the end for Hitler and the war. Paris was liberated on Aug. 25, 1944 marking the end of the Battle of Normandy. Total victory in Europe was declared May 8, 1945.

Alex Day is a member of the D-Day Commemorative Gala Committee, and an employee of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

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At work at the Otis Factory in Hamilton.

Vi Connolly, who worked at Sawyer Massey Argus, a Hamilton factory involved in the war effort, while her husband William Connolly served on the Athabaskan.



KAZ NOVAK THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

D-Day, on the home front

A LOOK AT HAMILTON ON JUNE 6, 1944

BY JIM POLING

This story was originally published in The Hamilton Spectator in June 1994, on the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

AT 8 A.M. MARY FOUNTAINE rose from bed and, as her usual routine, walked down the wooden stairs from the second floor of the family farmhouse to the kitchen.

Unlike other mornings during the spring of 1944, this one was different. There was a sense of urgency in the sunny morning air. Her mother, father and brother stood breathlessly around the radio soaking up the news that families across the continent had been expecting for months.

One of them looked at her and excitedly rattled on about the Allied forces storming German troops on the shores of Normandy, France.

The day was June 6. Mary Fountaine was living on a 145-acre farm just outside Caledonia. She was 21 years old.

"We listened to our radio and heard the dramatic voices of Matthew Halton and Lorne Green informing us of the landing," Mrs. Fountaine, 71, said in a recent Spectator interview. "I was excited and frightened at the same time."

Neil Bain, her husband, a 19-year-old farm boy from nearby York, enlisted the previous fall. Mary and their infant daughter watched him go off to war. When she waved goodbye as he went off to serve, she realized it was duty. That didn't stop her from being frightened, she said.

"I was always conscious that something might happen," she said.

Her husband wrote faithfully, his time away filled by letters home. They were her hope, a link between a husband off at war, a young wartime bride and 18-month-old daughter. In one of the letters, he said he almost

drowned the morning of the D-Day invasion. The boat carrying soldiers to shore unloaded them in seawater six feet deep.

In July, a month after the invasion, the letters stopped. On Aug. 8, a red half-ton truck pulled up the long rural driveway. Mrs. Fountaine received a final letter, this one written on official government letterhead.

"We regret to inform you ..." it began. Her husband of two years had been killed July 25, 1944, during the battle of Falaise.

In Hamilton on June 6, day-break was greeted with fresh winds and scattered showers. The sun rose shortly after 5.30 a.m. By then phone lines had already been buzzing for hours, the news of the much-awaited invasion dominating conversations.

"Hamilton Waits In Tense Anxiety As Invasion Begins," proclaimed a headline from the day's Hamilton Spectator. People were hungry for news of the attack.

"While the majority of Hamiltonians did not learn of the invasion until they rose from bed this morning, there was a considerable number who heard the broadcast before resting and let their friends know this great news," the paper said. "The telephone in The Spectator offices jangled from 2 o'clock in the morning on, as the editors gathered their news from the teletype machines. People wanted to know if it were true — wanted to know if the news had been verified by the press services. For the world, it was an exciting hour."

The paper described word of the invasion as "a thrilling freshness that lost nothing through anticipation."

"Hamilton was eagerly excited to learn that at least the great battle for Europe was underway, with local lads undoubtedly among the spearhead troops," the Spectator said. "Every radio

set in the city found eager listeners, as broadcasts from the battlefield echoed across the seas and Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Mackenzie King told their people that their armies were on the sail for France, battling the Germans on their fortress front."

Along the harbour shore, the news rapidly spread from the wharves to inside factories. Men inside the steel mills broke from their duties for quick conversations about the development.

"I was working shifts and heard about it through the grapevine," recalls Reg Wheeler of Hamilton's Beach Strip. "We were in the steel plant and work couldn't stop, but you can bet there was a lot of hurried conversations. We got word there was a tremendous invasion and we were all proud, as proud as you can be in a time of war. Everyone was happy, but it didn't mean the end of the war."

Wheeler, a former city alderman, was doing war work inside the Dofasco steel mill. He says news of D-Day was mixed.

"We had the lesson of Dieppe and that was still very much on everyone's mind," he said. "We knew a landing on the coast of France wouldn't be easy."

"Hamilton had grieved before with a stout heart, the scars of Dieppe were still on her brow, and it was assuring to hear that the landings appeared to be strongly supported and were, even at this early hour, making good headway against the German foe."

— Excerpt from Hamilton Spectator news story, June 6, 1944.

In the city's north end, women working in the Eaton Knitting Company Ltd., on John Street were toiling making socks, sweaters and underwear for soldiers. In the morning hours, Rev. A.J. Love minister of Wesley United Church next door to the factory, listened intently to radio reports of the new front.

Hastily, he called an official at the plant and asked if the workers could be released for a brief prayer service.

Betty Tossell, 19, listened to the noisy sewing machines shut down as she made her way to the church.

"It was a wonderful gesture," she said. "It was unusual for them to stop the factory, but this was an important day. Everyone had someone or knew of someone over there."

A few workers stayed at the mill to mind shop. Inside the church people crammed pews and aisles, their bodies spilling out the main door into the street. More than 1,000 people attended the 15-minute service.

"It was a day of prayer and hope," says Mrs. Tossell, now 69 and living in Burlington. "This was the big push that would get the boys home."

By mid-afternoon the rain let up and bursts of sun added to the jubilation racing through the city. Rain clouds moved off and the temperature reached 19 C (66.2 F).

Joyce Hollings was oblivious to the excitement, making last-minute dashes preparing for her wedding that day.

Her future husband, a navy man, was stationed in Halifax but at home on a two-week leave.

"I had no idea of all the commotion until our minister called to say we would have to put things back a bit," says Mrs. Hollings, 70. "The minister was being called to a park in Burlington to say prayers for the boys."

The wedding, in the backyard of her husband's parents' home on Water Street in Burlington, was postponed an hour. At 7:30 that night, the high school sweethearts wed. It was a small ceremony with 12 or 13 people attending.

"Everyone was at war," says Mrs. Hollings.

Crowds gathered at Victoria Park, a popular meeting spot in Hamilton's then west end.

Vivian Connolly was at the park on the corner of King and Locke Streets.

"It was bittersweet," says Mrs. Connolly, then a 21-year-old armaments worker. "There weren't any planned festivities, but people just met. I was happy and sharing in the happiness that others had, but still my main concern was my husband."

Unknown to her, William Connolly, her husband, was a prisoner-of-war. He'd been captured April 29, when his ship Athabaskan was sunk in the Atlantic by a German torpedo during a pre-D-Day run.

In May, Mrs. Connolly received a letter from the Department of National Defence saying her husband was missing and presumed dead.

D-Day was important, she remembers. But Mrs. Connolly still had a heavy heart.

"I was waiting for some kind of word about my husband."

Three months after the sinking and about six weeks after the big invasion, her news arrived. Mrs. Connolly received a Red Cross



PART 6 OF 8

Next week: The D-Day Dodgers
June 6, 2019 will be the 75th anniversary of D-Day, one of the monumental days in human history. It was one that changed the course of the world, signalled the beginning of the end of the Second World War and shaped the image of Canada as a power on the world stage.
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postcard saying her husband was alive and in a German prison camp.

In downtown Hamilton's regal Gore Park, office workers and others packed the space, stopping traffic along King Street and spilling up to Main Street.

"We brought sandwiches and soda pop to the window in my office and watched all the excitement," says Ellen Fairclough, 89. At the time, the future Conservative MP from Hamilton West was a public accountant. Her third floor office was on the north-west corner of King and James streets. Eight or nine people stood in her office, faces pressed to the glass looking over the frenzied core.

"It was the perfect vantage point to watch everything. There was so many people in the streets, the streetcars were slowed right down and had a hard time getting through."

Late into the afternoon and into the night, folks were still celebrating. On Barton Street East people packed the Trocadero Restaurant, which Maria Pantalone opened that morning. She barely rested all day, trying to keep pace with her revelling customers' voracious demand for her homemade Italian spaghetti and hamburgers.

"It was a big party for everybody," says her son Tony Pantalone, himself stationed in Gander, Newfoundland, at the time. "It was a little restaurant. It seated maybe 30 or 40 people, but there were many more inside. People were in the streets."

"My mother was so excited. She ran out of food at the end of the day." Mrs. Pantalone was exuberant with her first day's success. She believed people flocked for her food.

"Later someone told her it was D-Day and the war was coming to an end. My mother is from the old country and she spoke very little English. I don't think she understood."

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Below: A hole blasted in a hilltop wall in Italy gives this Canadian, Pte. M.D. White of Grassland, Alta., a vantage point to observe any enemy movements while men of his unit move into a new position.



HAMILTON SPECTATOR WWII PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

An official War Office photo, titled *Two Minutes in Ortona*: “A cameraman in a doorway on the main square when Canadian tanks broke into Ortona. For two minutes, he clicked his camera. From his pictures this composite was made — one of the most outstanding of the war in Italy. On the left, a Canadian tank officer, crossing the square in overalls had opened up his tank to check firing results. A sniper’s bullet hit him in the shoulder. He is being helped to a dressing station by a medical assistant, while another is standing by. The Sherman tanks on the left are still in action. Near the centre of the picture, another medical assistant runs forward across the exposed area to follow the war up another street straight ahead. On the right, a group of half a dozen men have gathered round a wounded officer, who kneels while his back is bandaged. One man has caught sight of the camera, and peers inquiringly around the doorway.”

For many Canadians, their D-Day was in 1943

When the campaign ended 20 months later, nearly 93,000 Canadians had fought in Sicily and Italy, 5,764 were killed and another 20,490 were wounded or taken prisoner.

JAMES ELLIOTT
The Hamilton Spectator

This story by James Elliott of The Hamilton Spectator was published on July 10, 2003, on the 60th anniversary of the start of the campaign to liberate Sicily.

*“Look around the hillsides
Through the mist and rain
See the scattered crosses
Some that bear no name
Heartbreak and toil and suffering gone
The lads beneath, they slumber on
They are the D-Day Dodgers
Who stay in Italy.”*

— Ballad of the D-Day Dodgers

Just before noon today, a spry 82-year-old will make his way to the Cenotaph in downtown Milton. As his custom has been for the best part of the last six decades, he’ll come alone to the grey granite marker — no medals, no beret — place a single red poppy on the base, pause for a few moments and leave.

It is Huck Kelman’s homage to his best friend, Pinky Coxie, killed right beside him on an island long ago and far away in a campaign largely forgotten by Canadians.

Coxie lies buried in the Agira War Cemetery in the centre of Sicily, one of 500 Canadians killed in the month-long campaign to liberate the first stepping stone of Nazi-occupied Europe.

It was big news at the time —

Canada committed an entire division, about 18,000 men, to the invasionary force — but it would be overshadowed by the Normandy invasion 11 months later as the decisive blow to break German military power on the continent.

Canada remembers June 6, 1944, as D-Day and there’s a brand-new Canadian memorial at Juno Beach, but few Canadians realize the original campaign to liberate Europe began 60 years ago today on a sandy bay called Costa dell’Ambra on the south-east coast of Sicily, between Syracuse and Pachino.

By the time the Italian campaign ended some 20 months later, nearly 93,000 Canadians had fought in Italy, 5,764 were killed, another 20,490 were wounded or taken prisoner.

Almost all of the fighting was against the cream of the German Wehrmacht.

Although D-Day was bigger in terms of ships and aircraft, the Sicilian invasion — code name Husky — was in fact the largest amphibious assault of the entire war, landing 180,000 troops, 15,000 vehicles and 1,800 guns of the British Eighth Army (including the 1st Canadian Division) and the American 7th Army.

The invasion itself, however, was by no means a precursor of what lay ahead. The actual landing was largely unopposed by a demoralized Italian army and casualties were extraordinarily

light — seven Canadian dead and 25 wounded — but it was really just the calm before the storm.

CBC radio correspondent Peter Stursberg would later report on the ominously peaceful dawn that greeted the Canadians on July 10, 1943.

“There was something fantastic about it all. The early morning sun was shining now, and I could see the vineyards above the yellow-brown beach and the little white houses in the vineyards and a town spread out on the hills beyond. It was just like a coloured picture in a geographical magazine.”

Huck Kelman, a platoon sergeant with the Lorne Scots, remembers the heat — 46 C in the shade — “was killing, honest to God it was killing.”

Hamilton native Pat O’Neill, who went ashore with the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment — the famous Hasty P’s — was one of the first to hit the beach, sent in to blow up razor wire with Bangalore torpedoes.

Once ashore, “it was so hot it was like walking in your sleep. There was so much dust, you couldn’t see your feet.”

Helmets and rifle steel became unbearably hot.

Despite the overwhelming success of the landing, O’Neill says there was no false optimism.

“We knew it was coming. The first day was a cakewalk and then four days later, we walked into an

ambush. We first met the Germans at a place called Gram-michele. We were riding tanks and they opened up on us with 88s. That was the start of our war. From there on, it was you fought and you died. Or you lived.”

In Canada, the first news of the invasion was from Canadian Press correspondent Ross Munro, who through a stroke of incredible good luck, gained a seven-hour advantage on the English and American press.

His detailed account of the Canadian landing, because it was the first and mentioned no other forces, gave the impression the Canadians were rolling up Sicily all by themselves. From Sicily, the campaign moved north to the mainland where a Hamilton farmboy, Eric Mathias, manned Sherman tanks with the Ontario Regiment.

Of the three complete five-man tank crews that he served with, Mathias was the only survivor. “Some were brewed up (burned), drivers got shot in the head. One shell came through the side of the tank, took the seat out from under me and cut the gunner in half. I always figured I had an angel sitting on my shoulder.”

The opposition were the fearsome German panzers.

“When you see a tracer bullet hit the front of their tank and just bounce, yeah, it’s scary, but we got around it. The thing I remember the most was the respect we got from the Germans. And we respected them, even though we were trying to do away with each other.”

Indeed, German war records indicate that the appearance of Canadian forces in any sector during the often-bitter campaign was generally the signal for the Germans to commit their best troops.



PART 7 OF 8

Next week: It all comes down to the weather

June 6, 2019, will be the 75th anniversary of D-Day, one of the monumental days in human history. It was one that changed the course of the world, signalled the beginning of the end of the Second World War and shaping the image of Canada as a power on the world stage. Hamilton will pay tribute to all D-Day veterans with a sold out, one-of-a-kind gala at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum on June 1, featuring the world famous Glenn Miller Orchestra.

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The Italian campaigners gained their now-famous nickname after D-Day when British MP Lady Nancy Astor is reputed to have said the 8th Army was dodging D-Day while the real fighting was going on in North-west Europe. The ensuing uproar among the troops produced the sarcastic Ballad of the D-Day Dodgers.

Today, what was an insult 60 years ago is a curious badge of honour for the surviving vets of the Italian campaign.

“After June 6, we were kind of forgotten,” said Mathias.

“And the Germans left their elite troops down there for us. We didn’t have it any easier after D-Day; it was tough going all the way. I’m proud to be a D-Day Dodger.”

It’s a view seconded by Kelman. “We should get more attention. They talk about everybody else, but we did a lot of tough fighting. They were great soldiers, I’ll tell you right now.”

And O’Neill. “Once the Normandy landing took place, they forgot about us. We fought longer than any other division in the Canadian army because we started 11 months before the France landing. But I wouldn’t change a nickel, I wouldn’t change a dime. I was proud to be down there.”

Historian Daniel Dancocks in his 1991 book, *The D-Day Dodgers*, provided a sad epilogue to the Italian campaign.

“There are few memorials to their efforts. Unlike Normandy where every city, town has a picturesque plaque or monument recalling its liberation, Italy (perhaps understandably) has virtually turned a blind eye to its recent past. Superhighways have been built over the battlefields and most of the concrete fortifications constructed by the Germans have been removed.

“Only the cemeteries tell the tale of what happened here in 1943, 1944 and 1945.”

1944 - 2019

D-DAY

75TH ANNIVERSARY

Gala

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- Performance by HMCS Star band
- Performance by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders marching band

- Performance by the World Famous Glenn Miller Orchestra
- Performance by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders marching band

SOLD OUT

Tickets: \$200/person
Date: Saturday, June 1, 2019
Time: Doors open 5pm
Location: Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum

Thanks to the generous donations of the gala sponsors, tickets for all current or past member of the Canadian Forces are half price, including a guest. For details, please contact Emily Millar at emillar@warplane.com or 905-679-4183, ext. 253. To purchase tickets and for more information, visit warplane.com or call 905-679-4183

HAMILTON SPECTATOR

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EXPEDIA CRUISE CENTERS

WEEK-END

Remembering Our Past

The 75th Anniversary of D-Day

In honour of all those who sacrificed everything for their children, their grandchildren and great grandchildren, The Hamilton Spectator will be publishing a special section commemorating the 75th Anniversary of D-Day.

Written by The Hamilton Spectator’s award-winning journalism team, this will be a keepsake you won’t want to miss being a part of and will feel inspired to share with children in the future.

Don’t miss the opportunity to showcase your business and pay tribute in this commemorative section.

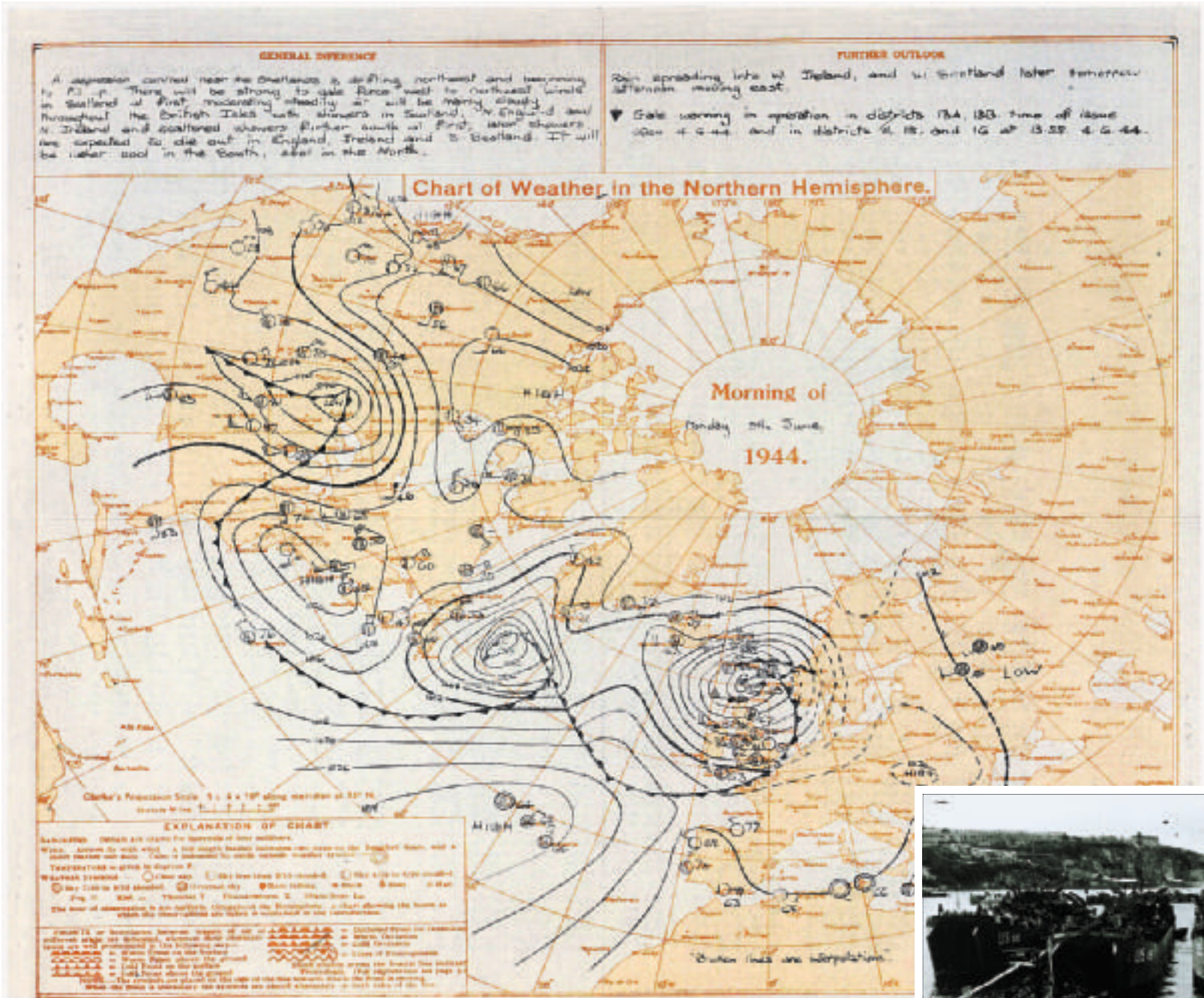
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THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

C M Y

Countdown to D-Day

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY, A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTATOR'S NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM.



PART 8 OF 8

June 6, 2019, will be the 75th anniversary of D-Day, one of the most monumental days in human history. It was one that changed the course of the world, signalled the beginning of the end of the Second World War and shaped the image of Canada as a formidable nation on the world stage. Hamilton will pay tribute to all D-Day veterans with a sold-out one-of-a-kind gala at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum on June 1, featuring the World Famous Glenn Miller Orchestra.

Today, The Spectator, in conjunction with Newspapers In Education and the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, completes an eight-week countdown to D-Day, with a look at the role weather played on June 6, 1944.

The June 5, 1944, weather map that Allied leaders used to decide if D-Day would proceed on June 6 or not.

It all came down ... to the weather

Presented with the latest, advanced forecast, Eisenhower said, ‘Let’s go’

ALEX DAY

IT WAS JUST HOURS BEFORE the amphibious assault of D-Day was scheduled to commence that Allied Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower postponed it for 24 hours. Originally planned for June 5, something made him change his mind.

The reason? The weather.

Treacherous seas and fierce winds threatened the amphibious assault. Air support would also have to deal with cloud cover obscuring targets and landing sites, and the storm’s rain would

slow the advancing army and its transports in mud.

Proven over and over during the course of the Second World War was the importance of the weather. It could make or break any operation quicker than the enemy. But, it could aid in one, too.

The Allies knew that and their plans called for a full moon to reveal defences, obstacles and landing zones for their gliders and paratroopers, as well as providing a low tide at dawn to expose the well-positioned underwater obstacles along the

beaches.

The next suitable date for launch was forecast for two weeks away, and every day that passed, the Allies risked losing the element of surprise.

Similar forecasts were being presented by meteorologists in the Luftwaffe to Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. He and his commanders assumed that because of rough seas and gale-force winds, any suitable window for an invasion would be pushed into mid-June. Rommel went to visit his wife on her birthday and many troops and high-ranking officers were moved around for war games and drills.

However, armed with advanced weather tracking and projecting systems, specifically ones in Canada, Iceland and Ireland, British meteorologists



HAMILTON SPECTATOR WWII PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, MCMASTER UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

A base in the south of England, loaded with troops and ready to set off for Normandy.

had a hunch that there would be an opening for the invasion in morning hours of June 6.

“Let’s go.”

The plan was set, and with those two words, Eisenhower took the full responsibility of the operation onto his shoulders. With victory, there would be a foothold on Europe to push back the occupying German forces. With defeat, a crushing loss of manpower and resources was certain to devastate morale. Not to mention putting any hopes of another attempt back a year or more.

As the operation unfolded, the

weather was still far from ideal. Allied air support was off the mark, paratroopers were landing scattered, miles off their targets and landing craft were flipping and flooding.

Fortunately by noon, the weather cleared to reveal a landing force that took the German defences by surprise and ultimately changed the course of the war, and history, forever.

Alex Day is a member of the D-Day Commemorative Gala Committee, and an employee of the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.



FILE PHOTO

Horsa gliders await their cargo of soldiers the day before the invasion launches.



TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Torpedo boats await the signal to go.

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HAMILTON **THE SPECTATOR**

Look for your copy inside the Hamilton Spectator tomorrow, May 31 st.