

Community Comment
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Anniversary of D-Day

The Sixth of June went by nearly unnoticed. Nearly 70 years ago, a massive invasion, the largest of World War Two known as D-Day, took place on the beaches of Normandy, France. The outcome of this foothold to get troops onto the mainland was so unclear that General Eisenhower had a letter and speech prepared for the defeat of the landing as well as the success. Looking back, the D-Day invasion of Europe is referred to as the turning point of the war. There are cemeteries nearby that attest to the terrible toll of American and Allied lives lost.

I was born after the war ended; an early baby boomer. My father worked in a factory that built bombers and never entered the war. However, my uncle served until wounded. My uncle was the third child born to a family of immigrants. He was the first boy to this small Italian family and was first generation American. Like so many families in those days, and certainly in our family, a boy was the one that carried the family name and represented the future. My uncle's name was Nuncio. His real name translated into something like Ignatious but his teachers couldn't pronounce it. They came up with Nuncio.

He was in his early twenties and in college when the war broke out. He volunteered much to his Father's displeasure. His father, my grandfather, was a new citizen and fully supported our efforts. But he worried about his son, the hope of the family.

From what I can remember from conversations with Nuncio, his military experience was not unusual. He was a 90 day wonder being trained as an officer due to his college experience. When he got orders to go overseas, he was surprised to find himself in North Africa. He was weeks away from the invasion of Italy which would begin in Sicily. Since he spoke Italian and especially the Sicilian dialect, he became a Ranger. He was often behind enemy lines as a result.

His duties took him through Italy and France. He was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge. He didn't talk much about his time Europe or the action that he saw. He talked to me a couple of times, I think because I was interested, and said enough that I know he saw the horrors of war up close and very personal.

When he was wounded, he was shipped home just in time to say goodbye to his Mother who was dying of brain cancer. He had a good life in Omaha, Nebraska where he was born. He was a musician and owned a bar and restaurant where he played with a small band. He was married and had a daughter. He lived into his seventies and died of injuries related to the wounds he suffered during the war.

He lived a pretty typical American life for his time. He was happy and proud of his country and of his service. While not part of D-Day, he served through his own invasion in Southern Europe.

His is not an unusual story. I mention it to honor him and as a way of remembering the sacrifice of those who, in my opinion, saved civilization.

This has been Sam pennisi for community comment.