



Left to right; 'Final Tribute' sculpture; Victory Arch; detail of the Assault Tableau

The National D-Day Memorial

The US remembers its D-Day heroes at a poignant memorial in Virginia

In sleepy little Bedford, Virginia, stands The National D-Day Memorial, commemorating 'the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied Armed Forces who landed in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944.'

Bedford, population 3,200 in 1944, was the home of the Bedford Boys: Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment, the only National Guard contingent to land in the first wave of D-Day. Of its 170 men, 91 men died, 64 were wounded, and only 15 were able to continue fighting by the end of the day. Of the 35 Bedford soldiers in the company, 19 died on D-Day, thus accounting for the highest per capita loss from any single community in the United States. In the largest military operation ever undertaken, 2,499 Americans and 1,914 allies lost their lives, 4,413 in all, on June 6 alone.

Placed outside of Washington, D.C., the Memorial represents all communities, large and small, whose citizen-soldiers answered the nation's call to arms. At the dedication ceremony on June 6, 2001 President George W. Bush, Jr. said,

"You have raised a fitting memorial to D-Day, and you have put it in just the right place - not on a battlefield of war, but in a small Virginia town, a place like so many others that was home to the men and women who helped liberate a continent."

The Monument's three plazas each commemorates a specific stage in the invasion. The English Garden connects the site with England, in particular Southwick House, site of the Allied headquarters and for the invasion. Here the patch worn by the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force is depicted in a large floral display. Cast in bronze nearby is Eisenhower's Order of the Day, issued to every D-Day participant. An English Folly houses a larger-than-life-size statue of Gen. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the invasion forces.

The Invasion Tableau, a blue-gray expanse, symbolizes the channel crossing from England to France. In a landing scene, a granite representation of a landing craft sits at the edge of a large pool by a sandy beach. Three life-size bronze sculptures, 'Through the Surf,' 'Across

the Beach,' and 'Death on Shore' capture scenes of the landing. Air-jets beneath the water create the illusion of enemy fire in the water around the soldiers who appear to be moving toward a heavy concrete German bunker. Nearby tributes honor the Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Corps who participated in the invasion. The names of those Americans killed on June 6, 1944 are inscribed on bronze plaques along the Necrology Wall.

Victory Plaza features a 44-foot, 6-inch tall Victory Arch inscribed with the word "OVERLORD," the operational name for the invasion of Normandy. Centered beneath the arch is 'Final Tribute,' a bronze rendering of a soldier's battlefield grave marker. The code names of the five D-Day landing beaches are inscribed in a semicircle around the arch base and the flags of the 12 Allied nations that participated in the invasion - the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, and the United Kingdom - fly proudly above. www.dday.org ★