

and Social Responsibility. He has been called "the conscience of the Legislature" and "the Johnny Appleseed of Self Esteem." He has made a commitment to recognizing California as the leader in the development of new technologies, the global economy, and to meeting the challenge of realizing the promise of our multicultural democracy, with every person being given the opportunity to fulfill her or his full potential his mantra.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud to call John Vasconcellos our friend and our colleague in public service. This pragmatic idealist and visionary is a source of great pride to the Democratic Party, to our mutual constituents, to all Californians and to our entire nation. We ask our colleagues to join us in honoring and thanking Senator Vasconcellos for his lifetime of extraordinary service to California and our country. Because of him and his distinguished service, we are unmistakably a stronger, better and more decent nation.

HONORING MR. GEORGE BOOMS

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise before you today to recognize the accomplishments of Mr. George Booms. He is a hardworking advocate for America's senior citizens. On Thursday, May 6, 2004, the Region VII Area Agency on Aging will show their appreciation to George during their annual meeting to be held at Buck's Run located in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.

George was born October 9, 1938, in Bad Axe, Michigan. He is a longtime resident and dairy farmer of Sanilac County, Michigan. George has made it his life's work to defend and promote human dignity for all senior and disabled Americans. He joined the Region VII Area Agency on Aging Board of Directors in 1993. The Area Agency on Aging, which was created by the Older Americans Act, partners with county organizations to service the needs of the elderly. During his tenure, George served as board vice chairman in 1998 and 2000. He served as board chairman from 2001 to 2004. Under his steadfast leadership, George was able to successfully, along with the help of various committees, secure a new and more spacious facility for Region VII Area Agency on Aging. George was also instrumental in leading the search for a new executive director. He has also dedicated numerous hours to advocating the MiChoice Waiver program for the elderly and disabled. George was the lead in guiding the agency to conduct a study on wages and approve equitable wage steps for all employees of Region VII Area Agency on Aging. Prior to George's service on the board, he was the township clerk for Sanilac County for 12 years and a Sanilac County commissioner for 12 years. He was also a member of the Sanilac planning committee and public and safety committee. Aside from his work with the agency, George enjoys participating in various related church functions and woodworking.

I know that George would want me to point out that the love and support of his family have immensely contributed to his overall success. He is a devoted husband to his lovely wife, Arlene. They have three sons, two daughters, and six wonderful grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, many people have greatly benefited from George Booms's experience and dedication. He is a man of moral character committed to improving the welfare and dignity of those in need. I ask my colleagues in the 108th Congress to please join me in congratulating George Booms on a successful term and in wishing the very best in future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION OVERLORD

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to recognize and commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing at Normandy during World War II. I am pleased that the ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Mr. EVANS, has joined me as an original cosponsor of this measure. I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this resolution.

The well-known phrase "freedom is not free" perhaps never meant as much as it did on June 6, 1944. Over 6,500 American troops suffered casualties on that day. Our allies also suffered great numbers of killed and wounded. Many more observed horrible images that were burned into their memories for the rest of their lives. Sadly, this was the beginning of a campaign that would cost the lives of thousands of Americans in order to end the "Thousand Year Reich" hundreds of years prematurely. There are many concentration camp prisoners—and their descendants—alive today because of the price paid by thousands of young men.

One of the reasons I feel strongly that Congress should debate and pass legislation such as this is that there are fewer and fewer original participants in the event, and our collective societal memory can become skewed and distorted. As the interval of time lengthens between our current understanding of a historical event, and when the event originally took place, its significance can sometimes become blurred or almost lost.

Many of us look back upon the Normandy Invasion at D-Day, June 6, 1944, and think of it as the beginning of Europe's liberation from the clutches of one of the most evil systems of government ever devised by mankind. In many ways, this understanding is correct. But sometimes I feel as if too many historical observers minimize the fact that the Allied victory at Normandy, and the subsequent liberation of Europe from Nazi and Fascist tyranny, was not inevitable. Many historians today are so obsessed with finding and identifying "fundamental historical trends" and isolating various factors and causes that they often overlook that much of history occurs by chance and by the sheer human will of key individuals.

On June 6, 1944, failure was possible. In fact, when you pause and consider the magnitude and scale of such an enormously complicated military operation waged by multiple nations, it sometimes seems amazing that the operation ever succeeded.

After all, roughly two years earlier, several thousand Canadian and British troops

launched an amphibious raid near the town of Dieppe, and this operation proved to be a complete disaster. Some of the highest casualty rates of the entire war were suffered during the operation. As a result of this military debacle, there were over 1,000 allied soldiers killed, and 2,000 prisoners taken by the Germans. The Allied raid failed because troops were inadequately prepared and lacked experience in battle, the plan was poorly conceived, overly complex, and lacked sufficient fire support from aircraft and artillery.

As planning for Operation Overlord was underway, Winston Churchill injected much needed caution and urged careful planning. Stalin was putting heavy pressure on Roosevelt and Churchill to move quickly and launch an invasion in 1943 to relieve the enormous pressure on the Soviets along the Eastern Front. Churchill worried that a 1943 invasion would fail, and feared that the beaches of France could end up "choked with the bodies of the flower of American and British manhood."

Fortunately, the Allies learned the bitter lessons of the 1942 Dieppe landing, and put these hard-won lessons to good use during the Normandy invasion. But there was nothing historically inevitable about the success of Operation Overlord.

The famed historian Stephen Ambrose put the significance of this operation in perspective:

You can't exaggerate it. You can't overstate it. [D-Day] was the pivot point of the 20th century. It was the day on which the decision was made as to who was going to rule in this world in the second half of the 20th century. Is it going to be Nazism, is it going to be communism, or are the democracies going to prevail? If we would have failed on Omaha Beach and on the other beaches on the 6th of June in 1944, the struggle for Europe would have been a struggle between Hitler and Stalin, and we would have been out of it.

It is also worth noting that General Dwight D. Eisenhower himself was not completely confident of victory. Prior to the launch of the great amphibious assault, he scribbled a brief note about what he would say to the press in the event that the invasion failed, and put it in his wallet. He later added it to his diary. The note read as follows:

"Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.

When the words of this note were first revealed to the American public, I thought how wise President Franklin Roosevelt was to pick a man of such character and humility as Dwight Eisenhower to lead the single most important military operation in American history.

Here was a man who was asked to oversee and execute the most complicated military plan ever devised, one in which so many things could have gone wrong that you could have blamed hundreds of different variables had it not succeeded.

A great invasion force stood off the Normandy coast of France as dawn broke on June 6, 1944: in all, there were 9 battleships,

23 cruisers, 104 destroyers, and 71 large landing craft of various descriptions, as well as troop transports, mine sweepers, and merchantmen. Combined, these forces constituted nearly 5,000 ships of every type, the largest armada ever assembled. Allied Air Forces flew 11,000 sorties to provide air cover, bomb beach-head fortifications, and most importantly, pin down the armored Panzer tank reserves that the Germans had available to counterattack and drive any Allied beachhead back into the sea.

Eisenhower had reasonable faith in his war plan, to be sure. He did not recklessly cast over 150,000 Allied soldiers into harm's way without taking every possible precaution to ensure success. But he was fully cognizant of just how badly things could go awry even if everything he could control went perfectly and on schedule. He was fully prepared to shoulder the entire blame himself if the outcome did not go well.

And there was much to be worried about. As the day of the invasion approached, the weather in the English Channel became stormy. The U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) reports that heavy winds, a five-foot swell at sea, and lowering skies caused General Eisenhower to postpone the assault from June 5 to June 6. Weather conditions remained poor, but when weather forecasters predicted the winds would abate and the cloud cover would rise enough on the scheduled day of the attack to permit aerial support, Eisenhower reluctantly gave the command.

Eisenhower also understood the awesome and heavy burden of leadership that comes with knowingly sending thousands of men to a place where many would not return home alive or uninjured. Planners had expected casualties of up to 80 percent among the airborne forces and glider troops. Eisenhower, knowing full well what was likely to face these airborne troops, traveled to an air base at Newbury, England to bid farewell to the members of the 101st Airborne Division before their tow planes and gliders carried them off to battle. The U.S. Army Center of Military History reports that a newspaper man who accompanied Eisenhower later told friends he had seen tears in the general's eyes.

Eisenhower's love and fear for his men was grounded in reality. Fewer than half of the gliders assigned to the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division ever reached their assigned landing zones on D-Day. Those that missed their targets either became stuck in hedgerows, struck German obstacles constructed specifically to counter glider troops, or were mired in swampy terrain. By midmorning of June 6, 1944, 4,000 men of the 82nd were unaccounted for, along with 60 percent of the equipment they had carried into battle.

Several of the beach landings went relatively smoothly and according to plan. But at the beach landing code-named OMAHA, many things seemed to go wrong all at once for the primarily American force. Naval and aerial bombardment of enemy mortar and artillery positions had failed to inflict substantial damage. As American infantry tried to take the beaches, they were pounded mercilessly by the German defenders. Allied rocket ships tried to bring additional indirect fire support, but they were launched at the outer limits of their effective range. When missiles fell short, they often hit Allied troops on the beach.

The high winds and strong currents blew many of the landing craft off course, making it

difficult to coordinate artillery support and leaving troops miles from their objective with useless maps. And where the Allied forces had appropriate maps, they didn't have the necessary radios with which to call in for fire support, reinforcements, or to coordinate their attacks. A lot of radios had gone to the bottom with their ships and landing craft. Many of those who landed were seasick or weary from the journey through choppy waters. Nearly half of the amphibious tanks accompanying the invaders sank, swamped by the high waves their design couldn't accommodate. Wreckage at the water's edge piled up and landing craft became hopelessly entangled in barbed wire and uncleared beach obstacles placed by the German defenders. Arriving at the battlefield during a rising tide, many landing craft became stuck on sandbars that were 50 to 100 yards from the waterline. Enemy machine guns, firing from heavily fortified bunkers, mowed down rank after rank of U.S. troops who had to wade to shore with fifty, eighty, or sometimes a hundred pounds of equipment through water that was often neck deep.

According to some estimates, barely one-third of the first wave of attackers ever reached dry land. Few heavy weapons made it to shore in the first wave at OMAHA making it extremely difficult to take out the mortars, machine gun emplacements, and artillery batteries that were raining death upon Allied forces. Some were killed the moment the landing doors dropped, as was so poignantly captured during the memorable film, "Saving Private Ryan." Those who were wounded and unable to move sometimes drowned as the tide moved in. Making matters worse, the force opposing them were seasoned German veterans from the 352nd Infantry Division.

Only sheer bravery and the monumental effort of human will posed against impossible odds carried the day at OMAHA beach. About 2,500 men were killed or wounded at OMAHA alone.

By the end of the day, the total tally of dead and injured topped 9,000. The American share was about 6,500. Among the American airborne divisions, about 2,500 became casualties. Canadian forces experienced about 1,100 casualties and another 3,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded. Approximately one-third of the casualties were killed in action.

At roughly 10 p.m., June 6, 1944, Eastern Standard Time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt broadcast a radio address to the nation, and led a prayer for the many thousands of soldiers committed irrevocably to battle that day:

Last night when I spoke with you about the fall of Rome, I knew at that moment that troops of the United States and our Allies were crossing the Channel in another and greater operation. It has come to pass with success thus far.

And so, in this poignant hour, I ask you to join with me in prayer:

Almighty God: our sons, pride of our Nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our religion, and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity.

Lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, steadfastness in their faith.

They will need Thy blessings. Their road will be long and hard. For the enemy is strong. He may hurl back our forces. Success may not come with rushing speed, but we shall return again and again; and we know

that by Thy grace, and by the righteousness of our cause, our sons will triumph.

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest—until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violence of war. . . .

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom. . . .

With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy. Help us to conquer the apostles of greed and racial arrogancies. Lead us to the saving of our country, and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace—a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen.

Incredibly, the high casualties suffered were less than Allied planners had actually expected. There were many who feared that Hitler would order the use of chemical weapons to prevent the Allies from gaining a toehold on the European mainland. According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Eisenhower's chief surgeon, Maj. Gen. Albert W. Kenner, and the Chief Surgeon of the U.S. Army's European Theater of Operations, Maj. Gen. Paul R. Hawley (who later served with distinction as the chief medical officer of the VA), had prepared their staffs to process at least 12,000 killed and wounded in the First U.S. Army Division alone.

Despite the losses, and the unspeakable hardships endured by so many, the invasion succeeded. More than 100,000 men and 10,000 vehicles had come ashore that day, the first of millions who would hammer the final nails into Nazi Germany's coffin.

The skilled German Commander of Army Group B, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, was quoted before the battle as saying "If we do not succeed in our mission to close the seas to the Allies, or in the first 48 hours, to throw them back, their invasion will be successful. . . . In the absence of strategic reserves and due to the total inadequacy of our navy and of our air force we will have lost the war." Rommel's assessment was ultimately to be proven right. Less than one year later, Nazi Germany would be beset on both sides by victorious Allied armies and surrendered.

Mr. Speaker, our nation must never forget or take for granted the sacrifices that were made to liberate Europe and put an end to Nazi tyranny. We must never turn our backs on the veterans who scaled the cliffs of Normandy against overwhelming odds.

As long as I have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I will make it my highest priority to ensure that those who risked everything for the sake of our freedom, are honored and served appropriately by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

HONORING CALIFORNIA STATE
SENATOR BYRON D. SHER

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 2004

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members representing Silicon Valley, including