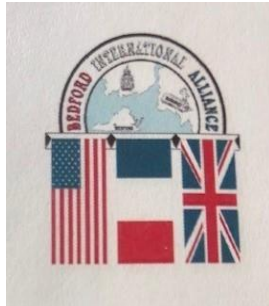


## *The Newsletter of the Bedford International Alliance*

### **Issue No. 11, Spring 2025**

BIA President—Steve Rush  
 BIA Vice President—Debby Allen  
 BIA Treasurer—Kim Snow  
 BIA Secretary—Courtney Garner

Bulletin Co-Editor—Jim Morrison  
 Bulletin Co-Editor—Sue Moore



### **In this issue**



**Interesting Facts about D-Day**

**History of BIA (Part II)**

**Bedford Boy Earl Newcomb**

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## **BIA Mission**

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, Allied forces landed on the beaches of Normandy as part of Operation Overlord, an operation aimed at the heart of Nazi Germany and the destruction of German armed forces. The landings began the liberation of France, followed by the liberation of other countries of Western Europe.

The Bedford Boys in Company A were part of the first wave in the Omaha Beach landings. With the loss of 19 Bedford men in Company A and one man in a sister unit, a total of 20 men, the Bedford, Virginia, community suffered the highest loss per capita on D-Day of any American community. Remembering and honoring these men of the Bedford community—those who died and those who survived—is a key part of today's mission of the Bedford International Alliance, Inc.

Since 1999, the BIA exists to promote the rich, historical, international relationship and kinship between the Town of Bedford, Bedford County, and the communities of the Omaha Beach area of the Calvados Department in the Normandy region of France and the communities of Bedfordshire and Ivybridge, England. Our mission is to further and deepen our ongoing and productive relationship with our sister communities through the exchange of continued friendship, educational pursuits, cultural understanding, economic interests, and periodic visitations. The Bedford Boys will not be forgotten.

## **President's Message**

The Bedford International Alliance (BIA) continues to strive in our community and within the organization to follow our Mission Statement -- "The Bedford Boys will not be forgotten."

Our current membership is 107. Please encourage folks to join this worthwhile organization.

I would like to join the membership in thanking two committees that organized our latest two social events: the Christmas Soiree committee for organizing the dinner at The Barn, and the St. Georges Day committee for putting together the event at Liberty Station, including Committee Chair Pam Crawford's fun teaching assignment for attendees.

The Ballard Scholarship committee, led by Charlotte Vincent, has awarded two scholarships, one to Liberty High School senior Maggie Witt, who will be attending Virginia Tech and studying biochemistry, and another to Staunton River High School senior Jacob R. Tinsley, who has been active in JROTC and will be attending VMI, studying history. Each year one scholarship is available to a graduating senior at each of the Bedford County high schools. Candidates must write and submit a 1,500-word essay on one or all of the Bedford Boys. Charlotte will be attending the schools' awards ceremonies and speaking about BIA.

One of my main goals with the BIA Scholarship Program has been to reach a level of funding that will make the program self-sustaining, with the student applicants having a life-long learning experience from researching and writing about the sacrifice on our Bedford Boys. Please consider contributing to this endeavor. BIA is a 501(c)3 charitable organization, so donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

The upcoming Memorial Day event on Monday, May 26, at 2:00 p.m., will feature as guest speaker Richard Gallant, a retired U.S. Army major general from Penhook. We will be honoring the

Bedford Boys interred in Bedford and abroad. I want to thank Andy Dooley and the committee for putting this memorable event together. Please to try to attend.

Steve and Sue Moore have worked tirelessly putting together the trip to France and England, June 1-12, 2025. Please thank them for their hard work. We look forward to hearing from everyone who goes on the trip.

Other upcoming events are Bastille Day at Avenel on July 14, for which more information will follow. The date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter board meeting had to be moved and will now be on Tuesday June 17, at 6:00 p.m. at the Old Italian Pizza restaurant.

Finally, I want to thank the Bedford Moose Lodge again for donating \$1,000 to BIA, with \$750 going to our Scholarship Fund and \$250 to the Memorial Day event. The Moose Lodge has been a strong supporter of BIA with help for scholarship funding, raffles, and meals. Thanks to Andy Dooley.

Steve Rush  
President  
540-871-4021

## Upcoming BIA Meetings & Events, 2025

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| May 26      | Memorial Day Ceremony at Greenwood Cemetery        |
| June 6      | Wreath Laying Ceremony at National D-Day Memorial  |
| June 1-12   | BIA Paris, Normandy, and England Trip              |
| June 17     | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q BIA Board Meeting                |
| July 14     | Bastille Day Celebration & Picnic                  |
| Sept___     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Q BIA Board Meeting                |
| Sept 20 TBD | Bedford Centerfest Participation                   |
| Dec 6       | BIA Holiday Get Together                           |
| Dec 7       | Bedford Christmas Parade                           |
| Dec 11      | 4 <sup>th</sup> Q BIA Board and Membership Meeting |

### Memorial Day Ceremony at Greenwood Cemetery

On Monday, May 26, at 2:00 p.m., at Greenwood Cemetery, BIA will hold its 11<sup>th</sup> annual Memorial Day Tribute to honor the Bedford Boys of Company A who are buried at Greenwood and Oakwood Cemetery as well as another cemetery in Bedford County, and those interred in France and memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at the Normandy American Cemetery.



### D-Day Tribute to the Bedford Boys

On June 6 at the National D-Day Memorial, as part of the 81<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of D-Day Commemoration, BIA will lay a wreath at the Homage Statue, honoring the Bedford Boys of Company A.



## Recent BIA Events

### Christmas Soiree—December 5, 2024, at The Barn





## **St. Georges Day celebration—April 23, Liberty Station**



## **Recent BIA Board Meetings – Summaries**

### **Winter Quarter BIA Board Meeting, December 12, 2024**

The board received a treasurer's report and approved a budget for 2025, with dues increased \$5 to \$25 per member.

Debby Allen reported on the BIA Christmas Soiree at the Barn, which 50 people attended.

Courtney Garner reported on the Bedford Christmas Parade, in which she and Denny Garner drove a car displaying the BIA banner.

### **Annual Membership and Board Meetings, January 8, 2025**

At the January 8 annual membership meeting, the following were elected to the board of directors for the 2025-2027 term: Pam Crawford, Phil Hager, Imogene Morris, Barbara Helms, Joyce Horne, and Larry Horne.

### **Spring Quarter BIA Board Meeting, March 13, 2025**

At the March 13 Board meeting, new treasurer Kim Snow presented a financial report.

Callie Bowles reported on the new wreath that BIA will use at future ceremonies on D-Day and other occasions instead of procuring fresh flowers each time.

The board approved purchasing additional BIA lapel pins.

Steve and Sue Moore reported on the June trip to Paris, Normandy, and England, including a visit to Southwick House in southern England which served as the headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces for D-Day.

Charlotte Vincent reported on her visits with counselors at all three Bedford County high schools to promote the BIA scholarship program. Two graduating seniors, one at Liberty High School and one at Staunton River High School, are receiving scholarships for the college year 2025-2026 (see details in the President's Message). The board approved investing funds in a CD/money market savings account for the scholarship fund.

Steve Rush will speak to the Bedford Area Welcome Center about promoting BIA in its support of the Bedford Boys.

Pam Crawford reported on plans for the April 23 St. George's Day dinner at Liberty Station.

## **2025 Trip to Paris, Normandy, and England**

The trip's mission is to honor the Bedford Boys at the American Cemetery in Normandy.

### **Schedule and planned activities:**

June 1, 2025, Depart Bedford – Motor coach to either Dulles Int. Airport

June 2, Arrive Paris -- 2 nights Hotel Grans des Voyageurs. Day to re-coup and explore

June 3, Day in Paris at leisure or individual excursions, tours in Paris

June 4, Motor coach to Bayeux. Bus to Normandy American Cemetery for placing of wreath at front of cemetery and individual flag placements on Bedford Boys' graves. Visit Lady of Trevieres. Dinner with French Omaha Beach-Bedford Association (OBBA)

June 5, Visit Angoville au Plain Church (where medics operated on paratroopers and German soldiers), Brecourt Manor, Utah Beach, St. Mere Eglise, WWII reenactment, Pointe du Hoc, Dick Winters' statue

June 6, Attend 6:30 a.m. service on Omaha Beach with OBBA, the official D-Day ceremony at the Normandy American Cemetery, Omaha Beach, Charles Shay Memorial, first airfield, Dog Green sector of Omaha Beach, Les Braves sculpture

June 7, Ferry over English Channel to Portsmouth Visit D-Day Story

June 8, Visit Southwick house (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) D-Day planning. Southwick Revival Spirit Day, Royal Military Police Museum. (When Sue Moore called the head of the Southwick Festival - they didn't even know about the Bedford Boys or D Day Memorial. They were so impressed that they wanted to incorporate that story into part of their festival!!) Our group will be honored in the "Map Room" with VIP's. They will recognize Bedford and the Bedford Boys. Later that day there will be a roundtable discussion with a moderator interviewing Giles Hoback, Martha (Stevens) Overstreet, and CW Higginbotham (Capt. Fellers) in front of a crowd of 200-300. In addition, we will have a tri-fold display in the church honoring the Bedford Boys.

June 9, Visit Bletchly Park. Bus to London.

June 10, Tour of West London (Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, House of Parliament and Big Ben). Visit Imperial War Museum, transit to Battle of Britain Bunker, guided tour of WWII Bunker and Operations Room, continue city tour (tour of London, St. Paul's Cathedral)

June 11, Day in London at leisure (guide available). Dinner Cruise on Thames River

June 12, Fly London to Dulles Airport. Motor Coach back to Bedford

\* Jenny Post, Bedford native (former site director of the D-Day memorial) will be guiding us in the Normandy venues.

Steve Moore

## NATIONAL D-DAY MEMORIAL --UPCOMING EVENTS

The National D-Day Memorial will present the following programs:

**Friday, May 23, at 7 pm:** The National D-Day Memorial will present the Stars and Stripes Forever Patriotic Concert, featuring the Jefferson Choral Society and jazz vocalist Tina Hashemi with her band. Tickets are required.

**Monday, May 26, 11 am:** Memorial Day Ceremony featuring guest speaker Cindy Parson from the Wounded Warrior Project.

**Friday, June 6, 11 am:** 81<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of D-Day Commemoration Ceremony featuring author and historian Joe Balkoski. Later in the afternoon, there will be a special panel discussion honoring the centennial year of our founder, the late John Robert "Bob" Slaughter.

## BEDFORD BOYS TRIBUTE CENTER



Front of the relocated Bedford Boys Tribute Center


## INTERESTING D-DAY FACTS

Prepared by Sue Moore

- **The D-Day clues were there, if only Hitler had done the Telegraph crossword!**

The Daily Telegraph in London had a daily crossword puzzle. MI5, Britain's counter-espionage unit, noticed that code-names had appeared in the puzzle. There were answers such as Utah, Omaha, Mulberry (floating harbor), Neptune (Naval Operation), and Overlord (total D-Day operation) used in the crossword. That caused suspicion. Two officers went to Surrey to meet with Leonard Dawe, a teacher who often wrote crosswords for the paper. The agents stormed the school and ransacked his home and office. They wondered why those five words were in the crossword puzzle. They interrogated Mr. Dawe for two days. Leonard Dawe was whisked away in a car and held until it looked like the war was going well. He claimed the whole time that he was innocent. He had often asked his students for words to use in his crosswords. Leonard found out later that some of his students had picked up the code words from local GIs and had told him those words to use in the puzzle. He unknowingly used those invasion words in his crossword puzzle two weeks before the invasion.

<https://veteransbreakfastclub.org/the-great-d-day-crossword-puzzle-scare-of-1944/>

- **The code names for the beaches** - General Bradley had a soldier pick a city name (Omaha) and another one was to pick a state name (Utah).  The British named their beaches after fish - Swordfish (Sword), Goldfish (Gold), and they chose Jellyfish, but it didn't sound right so they changed it to (Juno).
- **Hitler's Atlantic Wall** went from Spain to Norway for a total of 1,670 miles in length. Rommel had over 1/2 million Germans, Yugoslavs, Czechs, Poles, Romanians, and even Russian prisoners build the fortifications that consisted of hedgehogs, teller mines, floating mines, barbed wire, and another 5 million mines on the beaches. Hitler called these fortifications his "String of Pearls". The mines were designed to explode when the boats hit them, so they could not even get to the beaches. The soldiers who made it off the landing crafts would face the other obstacles plus the guns in the bunkers.





- **Flooding**

Flooding played a significant role during D-Day, both in terms of challenges for the Allied forces and defensive strategies employed by the Germans. The German forces used flooding to their advantage, strategically flooding low-lying areas to create marshy terrain and hinder Allied advances. It was deadly for many of the gliders and treacherous for the troops to get around. Many drowned. Below is a Horsa Glider that was pulled behind a plane and then floated to the ground. The second photo is of locks that controlled the water coming into the rivers; the Germans opened the locks to flood the fields.



- **[Alex Kershaw, author's page](#)**

As men of THE FIRST WAVE made final preparations for D-Day, they were moved to containment camps – the so-called “sausages” -- all across southern England and cut off from the rest of the world. Below is a rare shot of a member of A Company, 116th Infantry Regiment, of whom 102 would be killed, including 19 Bedford Boys, in THE FIRST WAVE on D Day. (Note: National D-Day Memorial counts 95 men in Co. A killed on D-Day.)



- **Before D-Day, divers, including those from the U.S. Navy's Underwater Demolition Team (UDT), and British crews in tiny X-craft submarines scouted the Normandy beaches.**

These divers used their skills to destroy enemy obstacles and prepare the way for the Allied landings. Divers scouted the beaches, took sand samples, identified enemy obstacles, and then destroyed them with explosives.

British crews used tiny X-craft submarines to scout the beaches and gather intelligence.

It was a dangerous mission, and they had risks of strong currents, cold water, limited visibility, and the potential for encountering enemy forces or obstacles.

Those divers and submarine crews played a crucial role in preparing the way for the Allied landings on D-Day by clearing obstacles and gathering vital intelligence.

<https://www.historynet.com/dday-secret-submarines/>

- **Patton's Ghost Army**

A 1,100-man unit was given a unique mission: to deceive Hitler's forces and mislead them as to the size and location of Allied forces, while giving the actual units elsewhere time to maneuver. The Ghost Army arrived in Europe in May shortly before D-Day and returned to the US at the end of the war in July 1945. During their tenure, the Ghost Army carried out more than 20 deception campaigns using inflatable tanks, sound trucks, fake radio transmissions, scripts and pretense. Hitler had an obsession with Patton and was certain the war would start at Calais, where Hitler was. This operation was kept secret for 50 years.



- **Slapton Sands**

**Exercise Tiger** was a rehearsal designed to get Force U ready for the landing at Utah Beach. On April 22, 1944, the residents of the English town of Slapton Sands, on the coast of the English Channel, were asked to evacuate. The exercise involved 221 Allied vessels. In the exercise, cruisers and destroyers would exchange live fire over the heads of the trainees as they landed on the beach. But the Germans had intercepted messages and the Luftwaffe flew several reconnaissance flights over the area. With all the information they had gathered, the Germans thought that this was going to be the real invasion.

Because the exercise was designed to provide Force U with the realistic experience of combat, the boats were fully loaded, including all the equipment that the men would later bring onto Utah Beach. Cruisers and destroyers would exchange live fire over the heads of the trainees as they landed at Slapton Sands.

On April 28, 1944, Operation Exercise Tiger began. German E-boats, similar to U.S. PT boats, attacked the Allied ships, and over 700 U.S. Army and Navy personnel were killed. This was a well-kept secret so it wouldn't affect morale before the invasion in June. The secret was not revealed until several years after the war. The Bedford Boys, specifically Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, underwent amphibious training at Slapton Sands in preparation for the D-Day landings on a different day than April 28.



- **Rupert's Inflatable Dummies**

Rupert's dummies were named after the British cartoon character "Rubert the Bear". Over 500 of these dummies were dropped as decoys in the wee hours on D-Day before the invasion. The operation was codenamed "Titanic." The dummies were 3 feet tall and were made of cloth stuffed with straw. They were dropped at multiple locations across Normandy, miles away from where Allied airborne troops were really landing. A small number of real soldiers of the SAS (Special Air Service) parachuted in alongside the Ruperts. Once on the ground they played recordings of battle sounds – including marching, yelling, and gunfire – to lure German forces to the fake drop zones. The Germans thought this was the real invasion. In fact, German units were sent away from Omaha and Utah to check out what was happening.



- **Pathfinders**

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne pathfinders were grouped into teams, each composed of a lieutenant (squad leader), four radio operators and four paratroopers in charge of the overall security during operations. They were dropped into enemy territory. They had to mark drop zones and landing zones for the paratroopers who followed. It was so foggy the night of June 5-morning of June 6 that the planes missed the drop zones. Also, some pathfinders could not mark the drop zones because of the enemy.

- **Paratroopers**



On D-Day, June 6, 1944, paratroopers played a crucial role in the Allied invasion of Normandy, dropping behind enemy lines to soften defenses and secure key objectives. Over 13,000 paratroopers from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were dropped, facing heavy enemy fire and often landing outside their intended drop zones. A third airborne division, the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, also was dropped. Despite the challenges, these forces achieved many of their objectives, including capturing bridges and securing crucial areas.

- **Artificial Harbors.**

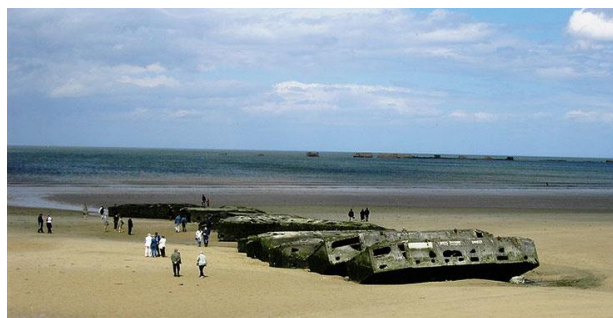
Mulberries, artificial harbors, were built a couple days after D-Day to bring supplies inland. There were 2 temporary harbors - Arromanches (British) and Omaha (US). They were meant to last just a few months. Omaha's blew away in a storm a week after it went up. Arromanches' still has many pieces on the beach and in the water. The floating harbors were designed to allow tanks to come ashore. They were made of floating concrete caissons that were hauled from England. First a dozen ships from England were sunk to form a breakwater. Then they emplaced a ring of concrete shells and filled them with water to sink. Floating piers were attached to rise and fall with the tide and provide a place for ships to



dock and unload supplies, trucks, and tanks. Three causeways, composed of steel sections, connected the piers to the beach. These were vital until major ports could be secured.



Steel sections



Concrete caissons that held the steel sections

## A Short History of the Bedford International Alliance

by Mike Shelton

### **Part Two** (Part I was printed in the fall 2024 BIA Bulletin newsletter)

In March 1997, Skip Tharp and I traveled to Vierville-sur-Mer to begin the relationship. Skip was taking on the Bedford area fund-raising campaign for the National D-Day Memorial and I was set to carry forward with a “twinning” proposal for Bedford and the Omaha Beach communities. This trip over 4 quick days literally changed our lives in many ways. And, it grew stronger the commitment I made to join up with the French people who experienced the wages of oppression, tyranny and battle.

When I met for the first time with the Vierville Mayor and Council, I was asked to sign a book the village had maintained of dignitaries who had come to visit their village and walk on Omaha Beach. The book contained signatures and comments from Dwight Eisenhower, Omar Bradley, George Patton, Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Colin Powell, just to name a few. The Mayor turned to a page that contained the official seals of the City of Bedford and Bedford County. I signed and Skip Tharp signed as he was a member of Bedford City Council. Then the Mayor said that they always knew that Eisenhower, Reagan, Churchill and military officials would come to Vierville. He then said that they never envisioned that the Mayor of Bedford, Virginia would ever be in his village and how deeply honored they all were. I felt unworthy, but what happened next brought tears to my eyes. Without any documents in front of him, he recited the names of every Bedford Boy who died on Omaha Beach, Dog Green sector on June 6. All of them, including Raymond Hoback and Earl Parker whose bodies were never found. I thought about how many of us in Bedford could do the same.





Later on that day in Vierville, the community gathered for a wreath-laying ceremony at the 29<sup>th</sup> Division memorial and the National Guard Memorial, a very short distance from Omaha Beach. After that ceremony, a community reception welcoming Skip and me to Vierville occurred. But, just prior to walking to the reception, an elderly gentleman came to me and started a conversation that I couldn't understand as I was not fluent in French. But, a council member who spoke excellent English came over and translated that the man wanted me to walk down to the beach with him. As we approached the beach, he was telling me his personal story as a boy watching the landings in Vierville. He was held up to a window by his mother and he watched what he claimed were the soldiers of Company A trying to land and cross the beach. He told me he saw them die and it has never left his mind what he saw. Then we both knelt on the beach. He took my hand and placed it on the sand. He said, "Right here, Right here. This is where I saw them die. If you dig deep enough you will find their blood. It was a horrible sight, but they gave their lives for me. Me and my mother. I love America and love Bedford. Thank you for what you have done for us." If that wasn't a life changing moment to experience that, I don't know what is.

I had meetings with the Vierville Mayor and village Council to introduce Bedford and vice-versa for Vierville. We discussed exchange visits, student exchanges, education programs and other joint ventures. I took on the duty to develop the written twinning steps and guidelines. It worked, for in June 1997, Vierville Deputy Mayor Phillipe Ygouf traveled to Bedford to begin the twinning process. He found that Bedford and Bedford County had numerous similarities to the villages in Normandy. So, our commonality was well understood. Any concerns or fears of the small French communities dissipated right away.

In the BIA's initial twinning, we joined with Vierville-sur-Mer, Colleville-sur-Mer (where the Normandy-American Cemetery is located), St. Laurent-sur-Mer, Trevieres, Louvieres, Formigny, Ecrammeville and Colombieres. All of these villages experienced the horrors of June 6, 1944.

During Deputy Mayor Ygouf's visit, the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors approved the twinning relationship with the Omaha Beach communities. That began the Bedford International Alliance and the Omaha Beach/Bedford Association.

Later in 1997, we began the first student exchange with Ann-Marie Lebarbee coming to Bedford from Trevieres, France. Since then, there have been student exchanges on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1998, 44 Bedford citizens and government officials, and leaders of the National D-Day Memorial made the first official visit to Normandy. It was a true life-changing experience to visit, but also to see how everyone is essentially the same with only an ocean and language being the differences. Strong friendships were made and hopefully will continue.

BIA in 1997 and 1998 established a twinning relationship with Woburn, England which is the home of the Dukes of Bedford. As you may know, John Russell was the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford and just down the street from where we are now stood the former John Russell Hospital where some of you may have been born and received medical care.

As the BIA further evolved, the twinning relationship expanded to Ivybridge, England, the location where the soldiers of Company A lived for about two years and trained for their eventual engagement in Operation Overlord. Ivybridge is a vital relationship for BIA members as they get the chance to be in the English village where the Bedford Boys were located.

Since the inception of the Bedford International Alliance, many exchange visits have occurred between Bedford and our Omaha Beach communities to continue to build upon our mutual histories and interests. Ivybridge has been included in this since 2003.

BIA is designed to educate our communities to continue the mutual interests and friendships we have developed. It is important that we continue to evolve this people-to-people relationship so that Bedford never forgets its sacrifices, that our current and future generations know what occurred in France and here on the homefront, and that we forego forgetfulness in favor of remembrance. Our

children and future generations must know of what occurred to our small World War II town and county.

I can attest that the people in France always remember and educate their youth. It is in their blood to do so and it must likewise be in ours. As we gather to remember on this day, our French friends do the same to honor and pay respects to the Bedford Boys buried in Normandy and those who are on the Wall of the Missing. I deeply encourage you to support and join the BIA and its mission of education and remembrance. Also, travel to Normandy. Walk on Omaha Beach, visit the people who live there, experience the scenes of battle, and absorb the history where the Bedford Boys came ashore. It is a truly life changing experience. Honoring our fallen soldiers in France will always be with you as our Bedford Boys are always in their memories.

Bedford has taken those steps and must sustain them as the home and host of the National D-Day Memorial. I deeply thank the D-Day Memorial for its mission, programs, and events that impact this important historical event. Deep gratitude is given to the Bedford Boys Tribute Center, established so well by Ken and Linda Parker. It is so meaningful and impressive in telling the stories of the Bedford Boys. *(Mention the events on June 6 at both sites.)* The artifacts and information of the Bedford Museum related to D-Day and all of Bedford's history is vital to seriously educating our population. The books, stories and news articles about Bedford's place in history are riveting. I just hope that those stories will be conveyed to our future generations. I can assure you that our French Normandy friends are educating their future generations well about Bedford. I have been in their classrooms in Normandy and the students may know more about us than we know about ourselves. Accept the commitment to educate.

## BEDFORD BOY'S BIOGRAPH SKETCH

### Earl R. Newcomb

Earl R. Newcomb served as the mess sergeant for Company A, 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry, before and during World War II. His wife, Elva Zimmerman Miller Newcomb, worked in Bedford at Hampton Looms before, during, and after the war.

Earl Newcomb was born and raised in Bedford County, east of the town of Bedford. One of six children, he attended New London Academy, finishing high school in 1932. Afterwards he worked in two Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps where he obtained experience in the kitchen. He first worked for twelve months at a CCC camp at Kelso, northwest of the town of Bedford, and then worked for over a year at a camp at Clarkstown in neighboring Campbell County. He later went to work at Rubatex in Bedford.

Newcomb joined Company A of the National Guard in the late 1930s, primarily to earn extra money. The National Guard paid \$1 for an evening of drill, plus extra for two weeks training in the summer. He became a rifleman and private first class. Later he became the company's mess sergeant and attained the rank of staff sergeant. He had a brother who served in the Army.

After Company A had been called to active duty in February 1941 and sent to Fort Meade,



Maryland, Newcomb came home on leave in June 1942 and married Elva Miller. Elva's first husband had been killed in an accident, and Earl and Elva would go on to raise Elva's three children. Earl returned to Company A shortly after the wedding.

When Company A deployed to Europe in the fall of 1942 on board the *Queen Mary*, Newcomb remembers being on deck when their ship sliced through and sank a British cruiser shortly before they got to Scotland.

As mess sergeant for Company A, Newcomb was assisted by four soldiers from Bedford County—brothers James and George Crouch, Carl Danner, and Kedrick Broughman—and by Bill Watson. These men fed Company A while they trained in England and fought on the continent. When in the field, they had trucks and a trailer on which they could cook. Company A soldiers had to eat K or C rations whenever Newcomb and his mess unit couldn't get to the men. Allen Huddleston, who was in Company A, remembers that Newcomb and his men were good cooks. Huddleston has said that some colonels and other officers outside Company A would come to Newcomb's mess to get a good meal.

(In the below photo, Earl Newcomb is shown in the front row, far right.)



For the invasion of France, Newcomb and his mess unit boarded a ship before D-Day and sat in the English Channel for about three days while combat and other higher priority units went ashore. Newcomb and the other cooks landed about three days after D-Day. When only eight men from Company A—none from Bedford—showed up to eat, Newcomb felt like he had lost many brothers.

Newcomb remained with Company A throughout the war in Europe. He returned home to America on June 13, 1945. From a military base in Massachusetts, he sent Elva a telegram, which read: "I'm over here from over there and will be with you soon. Love, Earl." He then called Elva to meet him at the train station in Lynchburg. He was given thirty days of leave and then was sent to Fort Meade, Maryland, and Camp Butler, North Carolina, from where he was discharged from the service in August 1945.

Resuming civilian status, Newcomb took a vacation and then went back to work at Rubatex. Before long he quit Rubatex and bought a farm of over 250 acres, where he raised cattle and hay.

Elva, a native of Bedford County, worked at Hampton Looms, the woolen mill, in Bedford for some thirty-six years, from September 1935 to 1971 or 1972. She was a “dresser,” making warps for the weaving process.

Elva did not remember a large turnover of personnel at the woolen mill during the war. Some men joined the military, and some left to work in the arsenal at Radford, Virginia, but men over the draft cut-off age of thirty-eight remained at the mill. To the best of Elva’s recollection, the Hampton Looms plant continued during the war to make mostly civilian products, although she remembered the plant did make olive green woolen blankets for the military.

In 1977, Earl and Elva moved from their farm to the Bedford suburbs. Elva died in 2005, and Earl died in 2007.

-- Extracted and revised from *Bedford Goes to War, The Heroic Story of a Small Virginia Community in World War II*, by James W. Morrison

## Internet Resources

- BIA Website: [my-bia.org](http://my-bia.org)
- BIA Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) > Bedford International Alliance, Inc.
- National D-Day Memorial: [www.dday.org](http://www.dday.org)
- Bedford Boys Tribute Center: [bedfordboystributecenter.com](http://bedfordboystributecenter.com)
- Normandy Website: [www.welovenormandy.com](http://www.welovenormandy.com) and [welovenormandy/Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/welovenormandy)
- Interactivewebsite: <http://interactive.guim.co.uk/embed/2014/apr/image-opacity-slider-master/index.html?ww2-dday>
- Video of Silhouettes of the D-Day dead on Omaha Beach:  
<file:///C:/Users/morri/Downloads/Normandy%20Beach%20-%20The%20Fallen%209,000!.pdf>
- History Traveler video on Dog Green Sector of Omaha Beach, where Company A landed  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGqQcnjTVmhcFpsjBhWqpGMQxGV?projector=1>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dddPqPuVs8>
- Photos of D-Day era. Put cursor on each photo, click on and hold down, drag from left to right to see the WWII photo change to a photo of same site in modern times  
<https://interactive.guim.co.uk/embed/2014/apr/image-opacity-slider-master/index.html?ww2-dday>



- Story and photos of American troops in Ivybridge, UK

<https://ivybridge-heritage.org/american-troops-arrive-in-ivybridge/>

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