



Task Force Normandy 65 Joint Information Bureau
Release #N2009-06-5-01

<http://www.eucom.mil/dday65/dday>
June 5, 2009

French citizens join U.S. Soldiers past and present to honor those who fought at Gourbesville during Normandy invasion

By Sgt. Fay Conroy

21st Theater Sustainment Command Public Affairs Office

GOURBESVILLE, France -- In the days before the landings at Normandy on June 6, 1944, the small town of Gourbesville was the site of a German aid station. In the days following the allied invasion the town and others like it in the surrounding countryside became the scene of intense fighting as the U.S. Army moved eastward deeper into France.

Almost 65 years later on June 4, veterans of those battles converged on the crossroads at Gourbesville to pay respects to their 300 comrades who were killed during the fighting and to lay wreaths at the base of a monument honoring them. The inscription on the monument reads: "To their liberators. The people of Gourbesville in memory of three hundred U.S. Soldiers who died on our soil June 1944".

"They have fallen so that we can live free in peace and happiness," said Brig.

Gen. Jon Miller, deputy commanding general of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, who spoke at the event. "We not only mourn our loss but seek to never forget the sacrifice they made."

Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 507th Infantry Regiment and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and veterans of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions saluted while "Taps" was played after the laying of the wreaths.

The ceremony here was one of more than two dozen taking place in Normandy this week in



SGT FAY CONROY

World War II veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division salute during the playing of Taps at the commemoration ceremony at Gourbesville, France June 4. Current Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 507th Infantry Regiment and the 101st Airborne Division were also at the ceremony.

honor of the 65th anniversary of D-Day.

“It was really good to see the veterans out. I’m really glad we’re here to be able to honor them,” said Staff Sgt. Bryan Landry, an airborne school instructor with the 1st Battalion, 507th Infantry Regiment. “These guys are out here and they’ve done great things for not just their country, but for France and all of the world, and I have a lot of respect for all of them.”

A plaque was also given to Randy Lewellen, son of R.B. Lewellen, who passed away two days before the ceremony. On D-Day, then Pfc. R.B. Lewellen, a rifleman with I Company, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, landed on the outskirts of Gourbesville.



SGT FAY CONROY

At the time the aid station located at the crossroads still belonged to the Germans. He soon encountered three Germans and was wounded in the hand during the ensuing firefight. He was later wounded in the leg and was captured by the

Brig. Gen. Jon Miller, deputy commanding general of 21st Theater Sustainment Command, speaks to veterans before the wreath laying ceremony at Gourbesville, France, June 4. Miller spoke at the ceremony honoring the 300 U.S. Soldiers who died in and around Gourbesville during D-Day and the days following the invasion.

Germans. He was taken to the aid station where his hand was amputated and his leg wound treated. Randy Lewellen was also made an honorary citizen of the town by the residents of Gourbesville in a ceremony prior to the wreath laying.

Another son was at the ceremony to represent his father who is no longer able to travel.

“He asked me to be here today to represent him and his 508 Parachute Infantry Regiment comrades,” said Jim Porcella whose father, Tom Porcella was a paratrooper in H Company, 508th PIR.

Reed Pelfry, who was a pathfinder with the 101st Airborne Division during the war, summed up the dedication veterans and their families have to attending ceremonies honoring those who fought in the Normandy campaigns.

“Only God and the cops could keep me away,” said Pelfry.



Follow us on Twitter: @USArmyEurope or @US_EUCOM

