

Good morning/afternoon, I'm NAME, POSITION WITH DAV.

Before I begin, I'd like to RECOGNIZE ANY SPECIAL GUESTS. Thank you for being with us today.

<PAUSE>

Memorial Day is an occasion for both grief and celebration, reflecting on the tragic loss of life and recounting the courageousness of military service. For those who have served, the day holds the utmost significance while giving our country the opportunity to pay tribute and remember the lives that have been lost in defense of our nation.

On June 6, 1944, the first wave of Allied forces swarmed the heavily fortified beaches of German-occupied Normandy and the invasion known as D-Day began. On that day, more than 4,400 Allied troops were killed, including more than 2,500 Americans.

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This event, unprecedented in scale, shifted the course of World War II and history itself. As we prepare to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the operation, let us remember that the remaining survivors of this battle and war, some of whom were teenagers at the time, are all now approaching or have surpassed 100 years old.

Their bravery and heroism displayed on the beaches of Normandy is the stuff of legend. Their selfless desire to serve and willingness to sacrifice their lives to defend our nation is a debt we can never repay.

On this Memorial Day, we honor all service members who have lost their lives, but this year, let's keep our World War II veterans in our hearts and minds. As their numbers dwindle, it is up to us to capture and tell their stories and ensure that their memories live on.

For DAV member, Navy veteran and D-Day survivor Richard Rung, this is something he has dedicated his life to and spoken publicly on quite often. Richard became a professor of history at Wheaton College in Illinois after service and has continued to honor the memory of all who were lost during this battle by telling their stories.

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Part of the Omaha Beach landing, Richard vividly remembers his boat being hit by shells that killed two soldiers and wounded two others. The experience of cleaning the blood off the boats and witnessing the rows of bodies on the beach has been forever etched into his memory.

For those who survived and have gone back, the trips may have awakened painful memories but have also offered introspection, healing and closure. During Richard's most recent return, he asked to be taken to the Normandy American Cemetery so he could quietly sit in the middle of all the crosses and remember all those who were lost.

We can only imagine the flood of memories and craving for solace (saw-less) that he experienced that day.

This respect and admiration for the fallen is something we can all learn from. We should all take a moment to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, whether we visit a gravesite or place flags, wreaths or other mementos at memorials in our communities.

There are so many ways we can honor their contributions. Today should not be the only occasion we remember them. By sharing their stories, we give others a glimpse of military service and hope that they carry that legacy with them to create a better world and stronger nation.

Duty, loyalty, courage—these are just a few of the American values our fallen heroes lived by and died for. As a nation, we must remind ourselves of these values and do our best to try to live up to them ourselves.

As President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in his return to Normandy, nearly two decades after D-Day:

**“I devoutly hope that we will never again have to see such scenes as these. We must find some way to work, and to gain an eternal peace for this world.”**

Let’s carry forward the legacy of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and commit to building a nation of strong, resilient communities that does not forget its past.

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