The French remember their war dead, not occasionally, but constantly. Annually they assemble on the beaches of Normandy to honor the Allied soldiers who died in the great invasion of 1944 and to remind themselves of the heroic efforts that led to the defeat of the German Army and the freeing of their homeland. On every fifth year, commencing in 1949, more elaborate ceremonies bring back to the beaches many Allied soldiers who participated in the landings, from Army Commanders to Privates.

On these special occasions, your Association has sent to France a Normandy Commission to represent the National Guard of the United States.

The ceremonies this year were especially significant, for they were highlighted by the dedication of the National Guard Monument on Omaha Beach. Nearly 1,500 National Guardsmen and members of their families witnessed the raising of the NGAUS flag, the gesture which dedicated the monument to the several hundred thousand National Guardsmen who fought in France in two World Wars.

The dedication ceremony was impressive by any standard. Assembled on the platform were the Ambassadors of six Allied Nations, and such senior American World War II Commanders as General of the Army Omar Bradley, Generals J. Lawton Collins and Jacob L. Devers, and the man who commanded the 29th Infantry Division on D-Day, Major General Charles Hunter Gerhardt. Ambassador Sargent Shriver spoke, as did M. Raymond Triboulet, President of the Comte du Debarquement.

By the construction of this magnificent monument and by our return to Normandy, not only do we keep alive the memory of those National Guardsmen who served so gallantly in two major conflicts, but we do our share, and perhaps more, to maintain and to strengthen relationships between Allies that predate the founding of our Country.

In these periodic visits to Europe not only do we join with the French, but with the British, as well. We again renewed friendships with the Council of Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Associations during a two-day stay in London, The Territorials, an organization which bears a striking resemblance to the National Guard and shares our feelings for volunteer military service as an essential element of a Nation’s defense, hosted the Normandy Commission at dinner in the Mess of the Royal Fusiliers in the Tower of London. On this occasion, we presented the NGAUS Distinguished Service Medal to the Duke of Norfolk, Chairman of the Association and Britain’s Number One Citizen-Soldier.

In the next issue of “The National Guardsman” we shall report in detail on the dedication ceremony and the visit to Europe of nearly 1,500 National Guardsmen and their families. For now it suffices to relay the comment of a ranking American officer in Europe:

“The National Guard has done a great deal to remind the people of Europe that the United States is a land of good people and good will.”

JAMES F. CANTWELL
President
National Guard Association of the United States

Normandy Revisited

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