

Memorial Day Ceremony
Normandy American Cemetery
Colleville-sur-Mer, France
29 1030 May 2011

- **CONSUL O'BRIEN;**
- **MONSIEUR LALLEMENT**
- **MAIRE THOMINES;**
- **VETERANS PAST AND PRESENT;**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, ALLIES, FAMILIES, AND FRIENDS;**

C'EST POUR MOI UN GRAND HONNEUR ET UN PRIVILEGE D'ETRE ICI AVEC VOUS EN CETTE OCCASION SI PARTICULIERE, DANS UN LIEU SI SIGNIFICATIF ET SACRE, HONORANT LES SACRIFICES DE TANT DE SOLDATS.

(IT'S AN HONOR AND PRIVILEGE FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU ON SUCH A MEANINGFUL OCCASION, AT SUCH A SACRED PLACE, AS WE HONOR THE SACRIFICES OF SO MANY SOLDIERS.)

AS A SOLDIER WITH 36 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, WITH THREE YEARS IN COMBAT, I CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE HERE ON THE MORNING OF 6 JUNE

WITH EUROPE UNDER A TERRIBLE SHADOW, WITH FREE NATIONS FALLEN, AND WITH MILLIONS CRYING OUT FOR LIBERATION, MEN STORMED THIS BEACH.

HERE, A GENERATION STRUGGLED ASHORE, AND THEN FOUGHT AGAINST TYRANNY IN AN UNDERTAKING UNPARALLELED IN HUMAN HISTORY.

THAT MORNING, YOU COULD SMELL THE SMOKE...YOU COULD HEAR BOTH THE ROAR AND THE STACCATO OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF WEAPONS...YOU COULD SEE THE SUFFERING OF THOSE FIGHTING ON BOTH SIDES.

NOT FAR FROM HERE, TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE AMERICAN RANGERS JUMPED OFF BRITISH LANDING CRAFT AND RAN TO THE BOTTOM OF CLIFFS AT POINTE DU HOC

THAT WOULD BECOME KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT, AND BRAVEST, ACTS BY MEN IN ANY UNIT IN THIS WAR.

THEIR MISSION – UPON WHICH ALL OTHERS DEPENDED – WAS TO CLIMB THE SHEER CLIFFS AND DESTROY THE ENEMY GUNS.

THAT WAS KEY TO SECURING THIS BEACH.

MERE MEN WERE ASKED TO DO THIS. NOT SUPERMEN.

YOUNG MEN – 18, 19, 20 YEARS OLD – WERE ASKED TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE.

JUST LIKE TODAY.

THOSE YOUNG MEN – THOSE RANGERS -- LOOKED UP AND SAW THE ENEMY SOLDIERS AT THE EDGE OF THE CLIFFS, SHOOTING DOWN AT THEM WITH MACHINE GUNS AND THROWING GRENADES ...AND THEY BEGAN TO CLIMB.

THEY SHOT ROPE LADDERS OVER THE FACE OF THE CLIFFS AND BEGAN TO PULL THEMSELVES UP.

**WHEN ONE RANGER FELL, ANOTHER WOULD TAKE HIS PLACE.
WHEN ONE ROPE WAS CUT, A RANGER WOULD GRAB ANOTHER
AND BEGIN CLIMBING AGAIN.**

**THEY CLIMBED, SHOT BACK, AND HELD THEIR FOOTING. SOON,
ONE BY ONE, THE RANGERS PULLED THEMSELVES OVER THE
TOP, AND IN SEIZING THE TOP OF THOSE CLIFFS, THEY HELPED
THOSE ON THE BEACH IN A SUPREME ACT OF SELFLESS SERVICE,
PERSONAL COURAGE, AND LOYALTY.**

**THEY WERE THEY BOYS THAT WENT ASHORE. THEY WERE THE
MEN THAT BEGAN FREEING THE CONTINENT OF EUROPE.**

**TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE LANDED....AFTER TWO DAYS,
ONLY NINETY COULD BEAR ARMS.**

MANY OF THEM LIE UNDER THESE MARKERS.

**AND I BELIEVE THEY ARE LISTENING TO OUR WORDS, AND
JUDGING OUR ACTIONS.**

**WHILE THE BOYS OF POINTE DU HOC GAINED THE MOST FAME...
THERE WERE CERTAINLY SO MANY OTHERS...**

SO MANY LIKE TECHNICIAN 5TH GRADE JOHN PINDER, JR.

**PINDER WAS SERVING IN THE 16TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 1ST
INFANTRY DIVISION AS A RADIO TECHNICIAN. HIS JOB WAS TO
DELIVER VITAL RADIO EQUIPMENT TO THE BEACH BELOW.**

PINDER LANDED ON THE COAST 100 YARDS OFF SHORE UNDER DEVASTATING ENEMY MACHINEGUN AND ARTILLERY FIRE.

CARRYING AN IMPORTANT RADIO, HE STRUGGLED TOWARDS SHORE.

STILL IN THE WATER, PINDER WAS HIT BY ENEMY FIRE. GRAVELY WOUNDED, HE MADE SHORE AND DELIVERED THE RADIO TO HIS COMMANDER.

REFUSING TO TAKE COVER OR ACCEPT AID, PINDER WENT BACK INTO THE SURF TO RECOVER MORE EQUIPMENT.

ON EACH TRIP HE WAS HIT, SUFFERING BULLET WOUNDS IN BOTH LEGS.

EXPOSED TO HEAVY ENEMY FIRE, GROWING STEADILY WEAKER, HE FINALLY ESTABLISHED THE VITAL RADIO COMMUNICATION ON THE BEACH

JOHN PINDER WAS HIT AGAIN, AND KILLED. HE IS HERE WITH US TODAY, TOO. LISTENING TO HIS STORY.

SO MANY STORIES, JUST FROM THAT DAY...

THEN MORE STORIES IN THE TEN MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED,

STORIES FROM THESE BEACHES, STORIES THROUGH THE BOCAGE, STORIES FROM THE HUERTGEN, STORIES FROM OVER THE RHINE, STORIES AT BASTOGNE, AND STORIES EVEN TO THE ELBE AND TORGAU.

STORIES FROM EACH OF THOSE FIGHTS, AND ALL OF THOSE IN BETWEEN, NOW REST HERE IN THIS FIELD WITH THOSE WHO MADE HISTORY.

OUR ALLIES WERE WITH US, TOO, AS THEY ALWAYS ARE IN THE FIGHT FOR DIGNITY....

THE BRITISH, WHO BRAVELY FOUGHT THEIR WAY OFF SWORD BEACH, JUST UP THE COAST.

AND THE CANADIANS WHO HAD ALREADY SEEN THE HORRORS OF WAR ON THIS COAST - THEY KNEW WHAT AWAITED THEM HERE, ON JUNO BEACH, AND THEY STILL CAME.

THE POLES, WHO THREW THEMSELVES BETWEEN THE ENEMY AND THE REST OF EUROPE AS THE INVASION TOOK HOLD...THEY HAD ALREADY EXPERIENCED WARSAW BEFORE COMING HERE.

THE ROYAL WINNIPEG RIFLES, THE FORCES OF FREE FRANCE, POLAND'S 24TH LANCERS, THE ROYAL SCOTS' FUSILIERS, THE BIG RED ONE, THE YEOMEN OF ENGLAND'S ARMORED DIVISIONS, THE COAST GUARD'S "MATCHBOX FLEET."

SO MANY MEN, SO MANY GRAND UNITS.

THE MEN – FROM EVERY NATION – WHO LANDED HERE AT NORMANDY AND FOUGHT THROUGH A CONTINENT BELIEVED WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS RIGHT.

IT WAS THEIR DUTY TO COMPLETE THE MISSION AND IT WAS THEIR LOYALTY TO FELLOW SOLDIERS THAT KEPT THEM GOING... DESPITE THE RISKS.

IT WAS THEIR SELFLESS SERVICE – THE COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER TO GO A LITTLE FURTHER, ENDURE A LITTLE LONGER, AND LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER – THEY HAD TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION.

THEY WERE HERE TO LIBERATE, NOT TO CONQUER, NOT TO OCCUPY.

**BECAUSE THE ONLY PLACE FREEDOM LOVING PEOPLE “OCCUPY”
IS THE PLACE WHERE THEY BURY THEIR DEAD.**

**BACK THEN, THEY FOUGHT A GLOBAL WAR AGAINST
TYRANNY...TODAY, WE FIGHT A GLOBAL WAR AGAINST
TERRORISM.**

**IN BOTH, SOLDIERS FIGHT – AND SACRIFICE – TO RESTORE THE
DIGNITY OF MAN.**

IT WAS HARD THEN...BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

**IN THE FACE OF TODAY'S CHALLENGES, AS WE CONTINUE TO
STRUGGLE UP OUR GENERATION’S “POINTE DU HOC”, WE ALSO
KNOW THIS FIGHT IS HARD, BUT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE.**

AND LIKE THEN, WE WILL PREVAIL.

**THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH FOR HONORING THOSE WHO
SACRIFICE, THEN AND NOW.**

AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.