

# Invasion of Normandy:



Sean Lawheed proposes to Lindsay Griffiths.

by Ted Rips

The reinvasion of Normandy began on July 3<sup>rd</sup> with the arrival of the CSUN army of 33 students directed by retired Army officer, Dr. Stephen Bourque, and assisted by David Livingstone, a veteran of previous staff rides to Chickamauga and Gettysburg. Like all successful campaigns, the CSUN expedition to the site of Operation Overlord and the invasion



"Professor Bourque, This is a mulberry!": Jaylena Patterson on Omaha Beach.

of Europe in 1944 required several years of planning by the staff and preparation by the students in History 497F and 641. In these courses students engaged in research focusing on the major Allied or Axis units, individuals, and specific tactics in the Normandy campaign. The students prepared to discuss their research when they arrived in the theater of operations.

Upon arrival in Paris, the CSUN invading force relocated to LZ Holiday Inn in Caen. They celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> with their first victory following months of secret planning. Atop the tower of William the Conqueror's Castle, Sean Lawheed, on bended knee, proposed to Lindsay Griffiths who said "yes" to the cheers of the entire platoon.

D-Day actually began at the Pegasus Bridge, a critical engagement in which British glider pilots landed and captured a key bridge from German forces that had put in dynamite to blow it up and stop the allied advance. The Northridge force met three British veterans from Pegasus the next day, bedecked with medallions and banners, and eager to share their memories with the CSUN Yanks.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> the platoon "walked hallowed ground. They stood on the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc where the Rangers gave their lives. They walked the entire 2.5 miles of Omaha Beach, in the water of the English Channel, and on the sand. . . . They climbed the cliffs to the monument of the Big Red One." They returned the next morning to the Colleville Cemetery at Omaha Beach

for the National Anthem and flag raising ceremony, a distinct honor and very moving experience for the CSUN recruits. Professor Bourque selected seven participants who had relatives that had participated in the invasion of Europe including grandfathers, cousins, and uncles who had landed at Normandy.

At each battle site students discovered that their preparation of the relevant literature and an annotated bibliography definitely enhanced their understanding of what had happened almost sixty years ago. Jaylena Paterson, for example, had studied the "Mulberries," which had been made in England and brought over to make a breakwater and man-made harbor off the Normandy beaches in order to bring in men and equipment to capture the port of Cherbourg. To find one that had washed a shore at Omaha and stand on it more than made her day. "Looking over the edge, down the cliffs, I can imagine the men climbing up" under German fire, noted Jennifer Garrett. "It does not compare with reading about it



R&R in Paris: Escargo and Beaujolais, Vive la France! Left to right, Jennifer Garrett, Amanda Thomas, Manuel Menchaca, Summer Stoner, Quinn Bobbitt, Gerald Devore, Jaylena Patterson, Lee Neckameyer, and Harout Garabedian.

# CSUN Style



Raising the Flag at collville Cemetery: Left to right: Kelly Everett, Manuel Menchaca, Gerald Devore, Jason McClure, Sarah Campbell, Jarrod Kellogg, and Ted Rips

in a book, being here makes all the difference." In making his presentation to the group, Todd Maki emphasized that "things that make sense to us now, like using the same radio frequencies between the ground and aircraft were just being developed here in Normandy." Some of the students recalled the personal experiences of their relatives, such as Jason

McClure: "when my grandfather left, he had not seen my mother, she was born while he was here. . . risking his life in a country that was not his home. The men here were fathers, brothers, and children. We must never forget that."

After over a week in the field, the CSUN platoon headed for Paris, a history course in itself. Under Professor Bourque's rule that everyone went out

- ### The CSUN Platoon
- |                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Naomi Ashley              | Todd Maki         |
| Darcy Bieber              | Jason McClure     |
| Quinn Bobbitt             | Amber McPherson   |
| Mitch Brown               | Manuel Menchaca   |
| Sarah Campbell            | Lee Neckameyer    |
| Gerald Devore             | Hannah Obert      |
| Kelly Everett             | Jaylena Patterson |
| Ariel Flores              | Eddie Ramos       |
| Harout Garabedian         | Ted Rips          |
| Jennifer Garrett          | Mereanda Seely    |
| Lindsay Griffiths         | Summer Stoner     |
| Guss Heather              | Lon Strauss       |
| Walt Hall                 | Prudence Strome   |
| Jarrold Kellog            | Amanda Thomas     |
| Peter Kindesvatter        | Mark Thrift       |
| Sean Lawheed              | Bob Tomilison     |
| Jessica Little            | Eric Ulfeldt      |
| David Livingstone         |                   |
| Professor Stephen Bourque |                   |

with at least one buddy, they started off at the Les Invalades, the main national history museum, and then took off taking advantage of day light until 10:30 p.m. with some going to Versailles, Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Arc de Triumph, and a cemetery with graves ranging from Jim Morrison of the Doors to Chopin, Balzac, Sarah Bernhardt, and Gertrude Stein.

As the students headed for home after Bastille Day to complete their required journals, they agreed with Bob Tomilison that "this is the only way to study history. To walk the terrain and see what those people went through during the massive invasion," the participants who fought and died on both sides. You learn not only the tactics and strategies of the war and the ground that was fought over, but you also come away with a mixture of pride in the Allied accomplishment and sadness in the cemeteries as you observe the never-ending rows of Allied and Axis graves.

The campaign may be viewed online at <http://www.tedrips.com/normandy>.



CSUN Platoon at Collville Cemetery