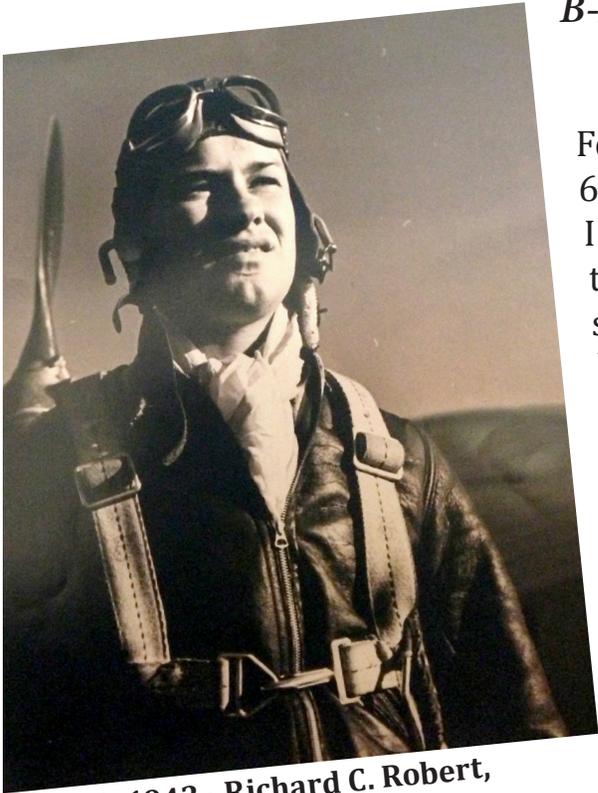


VIEW OF NORMANDY D-DAY INVASION FROM 14,000 FEET

*By Richard C. "Dick" Robert,
B-24 Tail Turret Gunner*



April 1, 1943 - Richard C. Robert,
Aviation Cadet, US Army Air Forces,
Thunderbird Field, Glendale, AZ

The historic Normandy D-Day Invasion by Allied Forces in WWII, took place 70 years ago on June 6, 1944. But in my mind, it happened yesterday. I can never forget my grandstand view of the tremendous Allied Invasion from our B-24 Bomber, some 14,000 feet above the English Channel between England and Normandy, France. This was the largest invasion to ever take place. It involved 156,000 ground troops, 5,000 ships and boats, and 11,000 aircraft (bombers, fighters, transports and gliders). This D-Day Invasion was the sixth of my 35 bombing missions over enemy occupied Europe as a 23-year old B-24 Tail Turret Gunner with the 453rd Bomb Group, 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force, USAAF in East Anglia, England, during WWII.

At a 4:00 am mission briefing on June 6, 1944, our 10-man bomber crew learned that

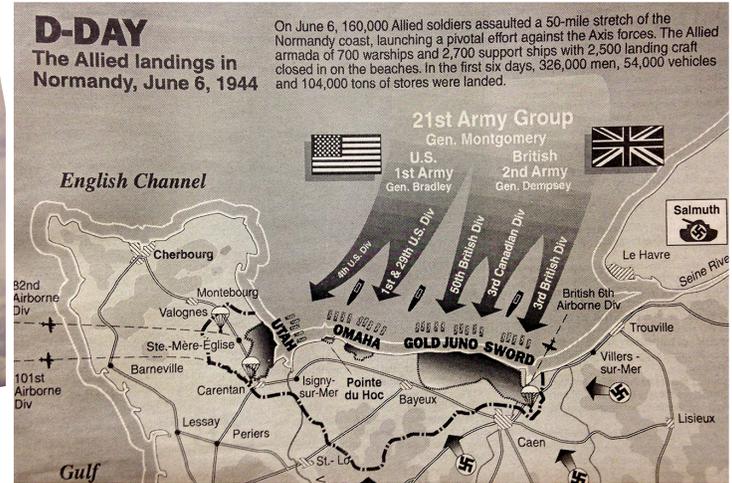
we would be participating in a history making invasion of enemy occupied Normandy, France. The briefing officer was Lt. Colonel James M. Stewart, the Hollywood movie star, now a highly respected B-24 Command Pilot and Group Operations Officer. For D-Day, there was a change in 8th Air Force bombing operations. Normally all planes from a Bomb Group flew together and bombed the same target. Not so today. The 453rd Bomb Group was divided into four Flights, with each Flight having a different target and takeoff time. Our crew was assigned to Flight C, the third mission from our airbase that day to bomb enemy communications at Caen, France. The other three Flights would each bomb separate targets in the invasion area. On this historic day, our airbase put up a total of seventy B-24



Dick Robert, December 1944



Dick Robert's B-24 Bomber



The Allied landings in Normandy, June 6, 1944

Heavy Bombers, and flew four complete missions: St. Laurent, St. Lo, Caen and Coutances, France. The Eighth Air Force, in a maximum effort to support the invasion, put up a grand total of 2,587 heavy bombers, of which 1,212 were B-24 Liberator Bombers.

From our B-24 formation altitude of approximately 14,000 feet enroute to our target at Caen, the sky was full of aircraft, and it appeared that the entire English Channel between Southern England and Normandy, France was completely full of ships and boats, all headed for the D-Day Invasion area. It was truly an amazing sight and one that I will never forget. As our B-24 bomber approached landfall, our target area at Caen was overcast and we had to bomb on instruments and did not observe results. Initially, we were apprehensive as to how much enemy opposition awaited us on this bombing mission. Fortunately, we encountered no flak (anti-aircraft artillery) and no

German fighter planes on our 6-hour long, extremely exciting bombing mission on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The Normandy Invasion was by far the most important and dramatic event that I have ever experienced in my entire life. I am proud to have participated in that momentous historical event of WWII.



Dick Robert holding his 1943 Aviation Cadet portrait

Join Dick Robert for a Special Presentation on the 70th Anniversary of the WWII Normandy D-Day Invasion on Friday, June 6 at 3:30pm in Duplantier Auditorium.