

# D-Day: Soldiers with ties to Northeast Oregon participated in assault

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Airborne in Sicily and Salerno, Italy.

The 82nd and 101st Airborne served as the advance party for Overlord, dropping behind enemy lines to clear the roads leading to the beaches and blunt the counterattack that would swiftly follow the landings. As the June 6 skies over Normandy filled with C-47 “sky-train” planes, Nazi forces answered with anti-aircraft fire, downing the transports, killing some exiting troopers and causing misdrops up to 20 miles.

Franco was lucky to complete his “quietest and smoothest” jump to date, landing just outside the objective, the crossroads town of Sainte-Mère-Église. He quickly found several 505th comrades, including the chaplain, who was so delighted to have survived the jump that he spontaneously clicked his identifying clicker toy a dozen times.

“Stop making all that goddamn noise, padre, you’ll alert the whole German army,” came a harsh whisper.

Franco moved carefully into town, set up his aid station in the schoolhouse, and readied himself for the coming onslaught of wounded. A timely administration of plasma, he remembered, could stabilize the critically injured.

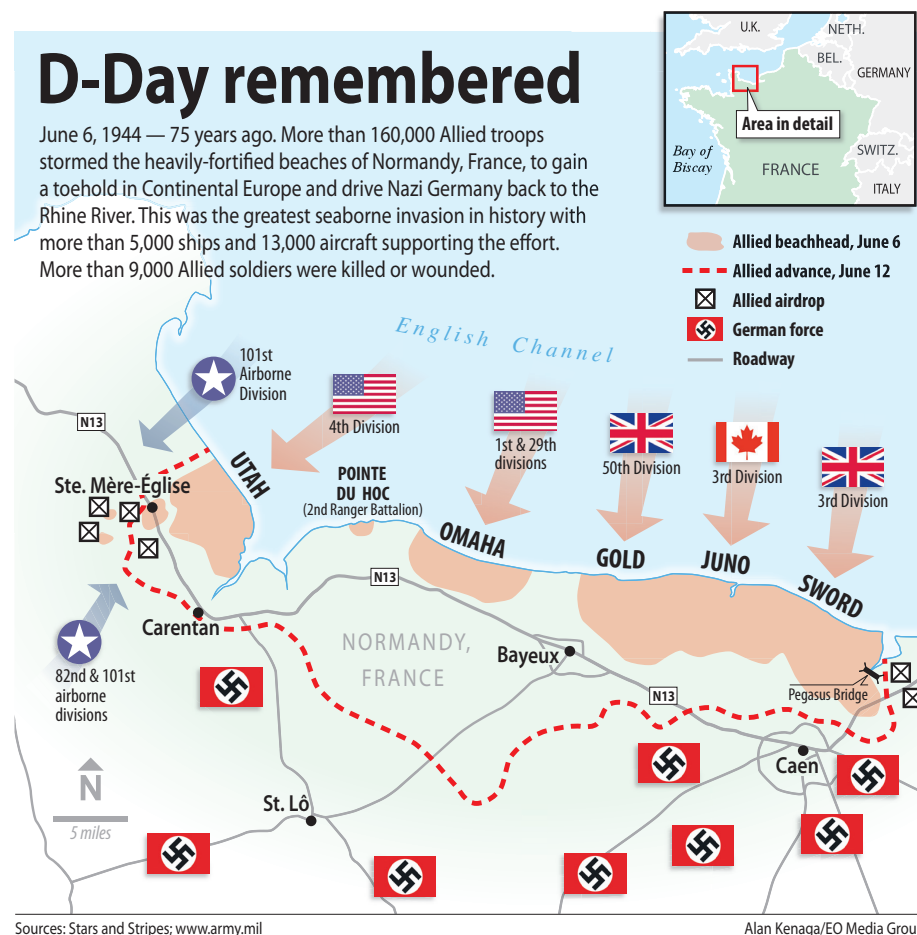
At midday, he was summoned to the scene of a horrific glider crash, where he found the pilot and crew beyond help. Fortunately, Whipple had already landed his craft safely.

A Salt Lake City college student before Pearl Harbor, the 20-year-old Whipple knew he wanted to be a pilot and eventually received orders for glider school. Glider pilots became the unsung heroes of the D-Day operation, eclipsed in public memory by the airborne, who starred in the TV series “Band of Brothers.” They flew “flying coffins,” non-mechanized aircraft loaded down with supplies, towed by C-47 planes and released to glide stealthily toward a suitable landing zone, after dark with enemy all around.

Lt. Whipple recalled watching his light Horsa glider being loaded for Normandy, crammed with a jeep (2,300 pounds), 57mm anti-tank gun (2,300

## D-Day remembered

June 6, 1944 — 75 years ago. More than 160,000 Allied troops stormed the heavily-fortified beaches of Normandy, France, to gain a toehold in Continental Europe and drive Nazi Germany back to the Rhine River. This was the greatest seaborne invasion in history with more than 5,000 ships and 13,000 aircraft supporting the effort. More than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded.



*“Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to victory! I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory! Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.”*

— Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
Supreme Allied Commander, 6 June 1944.

pounds), sundry supplies, a co-pilot and gun crew and himself. After the C-47 tow, Whipple and comrades took small-arms fire on the descent and struggled to

land, due to the overloading of the craft and the difficulty of recognizing the landing zone. Aerial photographs had depicted trees without June leaves.

They beat steep odds in coming down safely, just one of three in a grouping of 18 without serious damage or casualties. Whipple coolly helped unload his aircraft, enemy fire echoing all around, and made his way to Sainte-Mère-Église, where he informed 82nd Airborne officers about the location of the jeep and antitank gun and helped salvage supplies from wrecked planes and gliders.

The next day brought the march to Utah Beach for transport back to England, where Whipple would man resupply flights. En route, his luck nearly ran out. Nearby American anti-aircraft guns opened up on a swooping German bomber, sending him diving for cover. Once on board the landing craft tank that would take him to the waiting ship, he hit the deck as a sea mine destroyed the neighboring craft.

He returned safely, but no wonder he felt, as he later wrote, that “someone was watching over me.”

After the war, Whipple married Audrey Wallace in 1950 and had two children, John R., Jr., and Elizabeth. He managed department stores for Allied Federated Stores (now Macy’s) around the Pacific Northwest, including in Pendleton, later owning and operating his own JR’s Department Store in Cedar City, Utah. He and his wife eventually opened a bed and breakfast in Cedar City, Utah, before retiring to the Mill-creek area of Salt Lake City. Whipple passed away in October 2018 at the age of 97.

Franco returned to the U.S. in 1946 and married Ilene Andler, a surgical nurse from Boston, proposing to her at Fenway Park. The couple had six children and eventually settled in Richland, Washington, where Franco was a surgeon for 41 years. He also became a student at Washington State University, Tri-Cities, taking courses and interacting with young students. Franco passed away in August 2013 in Seattle.

Franco and Whipple typically declined to discuss the war through the years following the war, but it is not hard to imagine their quiet pride in the roles they played in the “Great Crusade.”

They truly did help save the world.



EO File Photo

Progress across the Interstate 82 bridge was slow going in June 2018 for motorists on the way to the Hermiston High School graduation at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

## I-82: Bridge to reopen by end of the month

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one-lane closures on the Washington-bound bridge as the medians that directed the two-way traffic are removed.

All closures are expected to be finished before July 4, in time for holiday travelers.

The two-year bridge closure has at times created long delays for commuters,

particularly during a crash or large event like the solar eclipse of August 2017. Last year’s Hermiston graduation ceremony in Kennewick started late because so many parents, students and staff were stuck in a bottleneck of traffic on the bridge.

Hermiston High School’s graduation will take place Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Toyota Center in Kennewick.

## Signs: New signs, rules pop up at Wallowa Lake

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“Our job is to provide irrigation and we want our dam manager to be safe.”

Dawson said a few years ago he rented a house across from the park and tourists would ask to fill up water containers and use his bathroom.

“When we were kids, everyone used to go to the state park at the south end of the lake,” Dawson said.

The increased use led to an agreement that the Enterprise District Office would provide signs that complied with management of all of ODFW-controlled properties.

“The Oregon Administrative Rule gives cops the right to do preemptive enforcement on the easement,” Kyle Bratcher, acting Enterprise district fish biologist said.

The rules cite dogs must be on leash, no littering allowed, and that the park is closed between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.

Sheriff Steve Rogers told Irrigation District board members he would ask his deputies to include a cruise through the boat launch parking area during their nightly patrols of Joseph.

“The OAR gives state and county authority to come into the park,” Rogers said.

## Foster: State still risking safety of children

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Progress will take time because of the “extensive” work needed to improve the system.

“In our view, it will take several years of consistent focus by DHS leadership, likely combined with increased staffing and legislative and community support, to lock in improvements,” auditors wrote.

Less than a month before state lawmakers must pass a budget, management at the state’s Department of Human Services haven’t even clearly told the legislators how many workers it needs to make things better for the thousands of kids in its care, auditors said.

And it’s far from clear at this point that legislators will set aside money for more workers.

Meanwhile, there still aren’t enough foster homes or other safe places for high-needs kids and youth. The total number of foster homes hasn’t changed since auditors released their report last year.

The agency isn’t collecting what auditors say is “critical” information on staffing and placements. And a new statewide hotline for reporting child abuse — which was supposed to centralize the process — has had significant problems getting started.

In their earlier report in January 2018, auditors said that shortages of foster parents, caseworkers and safe placements posed a threat to kids’ well-being and that the way the agency had been managed was deeply problematic.

Managers allowed a “work culture of blame and distrust” to foment. The agency’s leaders didn’t plan enough for expensive initiatives, target the cause of problems, or push long-term changes.

Over the past year and

a half, the child welfare program’s management has seen significant turnover. New managers have boosted training and help for workers, and “is making stronger efforts to identify and address the concerns” of workers in the field, the new audit said.

The 2018 audit, sought by the late Secretary of State Dennis Richardson — himself a foster parent — was hardly the first report on conditions in the long-troubled foster care system.

Auditors have looked at overarching bureaucratic problems, such as flagging morale over resources and compensation at the Department of Human Services, which is also home to state services for elderly people, people with disabilities and the poor, in 2016, and two years before that, at a technical system for processing payments.

In 2012, in a report on barriers to reunifying foster kids with their biological parents, auditors raised red flags about caseworkers’ high workloads.

In turn, they pointed to issues that already been brought up four years before that, in a study of caseworkers’ loads.

That workload report found that the state had about 24 to 37 percent fewer caseworkers than it needed for high-quality work.

And more than a decade later, it appears that the agency still doesn’t have enough workers to care for children in its custody.

Citing state budget officials, auditors said Wednesday that the agency still has “significant vacancies and high turnover” so even if the legislature provided money to add workers, there’s a significant risk they could remain empty.

The agency has cut down on overtime by lowering the amount of time that foster kids spend in hotels — which

prompted a public outcry several years ago — but the agency hasn’t clearly told the legislature what it lacks, isn’t keeping track of turnover or worker use of family leave, and doesn’t have staff to send multiple people out to calls that could be dangerous, the audit said.

Previous efforts to implement changes to the system have fallen short.

Three years ago, in the wake of a scandal at a Portland foster care provider, lawmakers created a special child foster care advisory commission designed to turn the many reports on how to improve the system into policies.

But as previous reporting by the Oregon Capital Bureau has shown, the commission struggled to get off the ground and has not had any discernible effect on the state’s foster kids.

Gov. Kate Brown is under pressure to make changes.

She took office in February 2015, and her tenure has been punctuated by problems in the child welfare system. They seem to come to a head every few months — whether it has been the state’s practice of shipping kids to out-of-state facilities, the state’s handling of problematic providers, or housing foster children in hotels and DHS offices because there are so few foster homes available.

In mid-April, Brown established her own oversight board for child welfare, including high-profile state executives and experts in various fields, to try to turn the system around. Since then, the board has met three times.

In an effort to address public concerns about access to its information, the board approved a new public records process and has been directing a crisis management team brought on to spearhead changes at the agency, according to the governor’s office.

“The governor is pleased with progress of the board and the crisis management team,” spokeswoman Lisa Morawski said in an email to the Oregon Capital Bureau Tuesday.

The budget for the state’s Department of Human Services has not been finalized, so it’s not clear how much money legislators will approve for the state’s largest agency.

Last year, Brown proposed a \$56 million increase in funding for the child welfare program for the next two years, auditors said in their Wednesday report.

Auditors said Wednesday that to serve kids better, the agency should get more workers and support.

“Additional staff and program support, while costly, would likely reduce staff workloads and improve child safety and family stability,” auditors wrote.

The governor’s office is urging lawmakers to boost funding for the child welfare system through two bills: Senate Bill 1 and Senate Bill 221.

The governor’s office said in an email that those proposals would “improve services” for kids with special needs and provide the agency more money for staff “to help lower caseloads and improve staff culture and child safety.”

Other factors have complicated reforms over the years. While agency leaders have struggled to implement policies, the legislature and federal government passed new laws and regulations in a seeming constant stream.

Some advocates, meanwhile, stress the state should be looking at the underlying causes that lead children to enter foster care in the first place, such as addiction, poverty and lack of access to mental and behavioral health services.