The Isigny-Omaha (Normandy) signing occurred close to the 79th anniversary of D-Day which took place at Normandy - Omaha & Utah Beaches.

For information on some of the heroes, "Angels" of that battle, please read the article below from Eric Hogan recently published by the *National Review*.

The Angels of Omaha



American troops approach Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944.*(Army Signal Corps/National Archives/Handut via Reuters)*

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By **ERIC HOGAN**

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Looking at D-Day through the actions of three of Operation Overlord's bravest soldiers.

THE single most important day of the 20th century was 79 years ago on June 6, 1944: D-Day. The official code name for the World War II Allied campaign launched that day was Operation Overlord.

On that momentous day, it was determined whether the Allies, who had assembled the largest amphibious force in history, would successfully establish a beachhead on the Normandy coast of France. From there, they would begin the liberation of Western Europe from the four-year occupation of Nazi Germany.

The Allies had designated five landing beaches along the Normandy coast, from west to east: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. The Germans had been fooled into believing that the most likely invasion beaches would be farther northeast up the French coast near Calais, the narrowest point in the English Channel.

In the greatest intelligence deception of World War II, the Allies had convinced the Germans that the feared General George Patton would lead an amphibious assault across the channel to seize the Calais area. This effective deception played an important role in allowing the actual landings on all the Normandy beaches — except one — to go relatively smoothly with fewer casualties than expected. The one exception was Omaha Beach, which came frightfully close to becoming a disaster.

Two-thirds of the invasion troops from the United States on D-Day assaulted a four-mile-long beach overlooked by steep bluffs fortified with numerous enemy gun emplacements and blocked off at either end by limestone cliffs. It became known as "Bloody Omaha."

The American 1st Infantry Division and 29th Infantry Division would be badly mauled in their dawn landing at Omaha Beach. Rough seas from marginal weather conditions, mined obstacles on the beach and mines in the bluffs, a sea wall to overcome, barbed wire, and heavily armed concrete fortifications beyond waylaid them. The concrete fortifications also included the deadly German MG-42 heavy machine gun that could shoot 1,200 rounds per minute, more than twice as many rounds as American and British machine guns. The MG-42 laid down a withering, suppressing fire with a distinctive sound that earned it the nickname ""Hitler's buzzsaw."

At the western end of Omaha, the first wave of soldiers was all but wiped out, barely able to shoot back against the Germans. Succeeding waves piled up on the sea wall. Chaos reigned. The Americans were paralyzed, unable to mount an attack against the German defenders.

With more than 1,000 dead in just a few hours and bodies strewn everywhere on the beach, the American high command began to consider evacuating the beach. This would have left a German-controlled beach area between American troops on Utah Beach and the other three British/Canadian beaches — a serious problem for the Allies.

Amid this looming tragedy, a company of roughly 150 men from the 1st Infantry Division commanded by Captain Joseph Dawson miraculously landed on the beach where there was a tiny gap between the interlocking fields of heavy gunfire coming from the German fortifications. They safely got to the sea wall and reorganized to prepare an attack on the strong fortifications as their orders dictated.

PhotosD-DAY: JUNE 6, 1944



The famous historian Stephen Ambrose chronicled in his book *D-Day* that when Captain Dawson observed the piles of bodies to his left and right and sized up the grim situation, he decided to ignore his orders, which were to make a direct, suicidal attack against the formidable German fortifications. Instead, his company would move straight inland between the fortifications and try to pick its way between some smaller hills and ravines, with the goal of reaching the high bluffs overlooking the beach.

In his personal combat memoirs, Captain Dawson recalls that as, his company began to move inland, he saw a couple of dead soldiers who had been killed by a detonating landmine, so he used extreme caution leading his men through the minefield unharmed. Continuing to move forward and higher by crawling and crouching, the company

eventually came under fire of a German machine gun up on the bluff that wounded several of his men.

After telling his men to find cover, Dawson began crawling through the brush and sand to work his way up and to the side of the machine gun position on the bluff. According to his memoirs, he looked back down and saw another platoon of Americans commanded by Lieutenant John Spalding coming up the hill to the side of his company. Lieutenant Spalding's platoon had landed in almost the same spot on the beach a few minutes after Dawson's company and decided to follow it inland, given the human carnage on the beach. Using hand signals, Dawson managed to get the attention of Sergeant Philip Streczyk, a seasoned combat veteran on whom the inexperienced Spalding relied. Dawson directed Streczyk and his man to put a suppressing fire on the German machine-gun nest so he could sneak the rest of the way up the bluff undetected by the Germans.

As Dawson reached the top of the bluff to the side of the machine-gun nest, he pulled the pin out of two hand grenades. The Germans spotted him about ten yards away and quickly tried to turn their gun on him, but he made two perfect throws with his grenades and killed all the Germans. At this moment in time, Dawson was probably the first American to reach the top of the bluff towering above Omaha Beach. The first opening was now cleared for Americans to exploit and turn the tide of battle.

Dawson then waved for all the soldiers to join him at the top of the bluff to formulate a plan. He instructed Spalding and Streczyk to head west to attack one of the strong German fortifications that was savaging the men on the beach. Dawson would move his company east toward the village of Colleville-sur-Mer, to the rear of another strong German fortification. They also sent men back down to the beach to direct more American units to ascend to the bluffs and attack the Germans from the flanks.

Spalding and Streczyk successfully neutralized the strong German fortification they were after, along with several smaller positions they encountered. The experienced warrior Streczyk primarily led the attacks, which involved extensive close-quarters combat. Some more rapidly moving American troops joined Dawson near Colleville-sur-Mer in the early afternoon. They attacked from the rear and destroyed the other strong German fortification. Even as the brutal fighting continued, control of the situation at Omaha had now shifted to the Americans.

Once the invasion began and troops were landing on the beaches, the outcome of the battle was transferred from the higher commanders to the men on the beach. There was no brilliant decision that Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower or Operation Overlord Field Commander General Omar Bradley could make that might affect the outcome. It was in the greatest tradition of the average G.I. Joe American soldier that a trio of Americans found themselves in a desperate, perilous situation on Omaha Beach and recognized that their existing orders were useless. They then assessed their situation, recognized an opportunity, took the initiative, and adapted and improvised their tactics to be successful.

Captain Dawson, Lieutenant Spalding, and Sergeant Streczyk were all awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest medal for valor given by the U.S. Army. Streczyk was a highly decorated soldier. He was also awarded four Silver Stars and six Bronze Stars for bravery. He served 440 days in combat: in North Africa, Sicily, France, and Germany. He suffered physical and emotional problems after the war, tragically committing suicide in 1958, at 39. At the huge Normandy festivities celebrating the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994, the Army honored Captain Dawson by asking him to introduce President Bill Clinton (as the keynote speaker of the celebration).

Dawson, Spalding, and Streczyk, and the men they led, managed to slip in between strong German fortifications that were slaughtering the troops on the beach and to fight their way to the top of the Omaha bluff, clearing a path that others could follow. Using the element of surprise by attacking from the rear, they methodically destroyed many German defenses. Besides saving hundreds, perhaps thousands, of American lives, these three unsung American heroes were probably most responsible for transforming the D-Day battle at Omaha Beach from a bitter defeat into a glorious victory. Surely, these three men deserve to be fondly remembered as “the Angels of Omaha.”