

JUNO: Canadians at D-Day June 6, 1944

Author: Ted Barris

Published by: Thomas Allen Publishers

Retail Price: \$34.95 in Canada

If you are looking for a traditional history of "Operation Overlord" or an in-depth analysis of the strategic planning D-Day landings, then Ted Barris' book is not for you. If, on the other hand, you are looking for a book about the involvement of "average" Canadians in the landings as told by those that were there then you will find this book a "must read."

In his introduction to Barris' book, John Keegan notes the significant contribution that Canada made to "D-Day" operations. Although large in landmass, Canada's population only numbered some eleven million souls in 1944. Yet, it provided nearly twenty percent of the strength of the military forces used to secure the beachhead for the "Second Front." In addition to the ten infantry battalions, three



armoured and three artillery regiments of the main assault force, there were also significant support and specialist forces dedicated to the operation. In the air over the battlefield, RCAF squadrons as well as

RCAF personnel in RAF squadrons that flew in support of their "brothers" on the ground, providing the strategic and tactical support to the landing forces' urgent operational tasks. At sea the RCN had a small fleet performing a wide variety of duties from naval gunfire support to minesweeping. It was an extraordinary effort and one of the few times that the Canadian military has fought in a combined force.

Barris' approach to writing about D-Day is excellent. He uses the basic framework of time, location and event as the backdrop for the cast of historical "play." In each episode he sets the scene, the events, the time and then introduces the characters. They tell their stories from their point of view and in their own words. Each little vignette holds a treasure chest of perception, information and emotional impact. To explain the events that we are about to

be told, some of these "stories" reach back into periods well before the war as a necessary prelude. It is an effective technique.

There are only two issues that one must bear in mind when reading this book. First, as the author of "Marine At War" Russell Johnson once observed, it is very hard not to make yourself into a "hero" when you recount your wartime experiences for others after time has mellowed your experiences. Memories fade, perceptions become skewed and there is often the need to put the "best face" on all stories about personal battle experiences and military service in general. Secondly, there are a number of minor editing problems – several rough spots that could have been smoothed out a bit more and an annoying inconsistent use of rank title abbreviations. However, that having been said, these two areas are minor indeed when viewed against the rest of the book and do not detract from the overall quality.

This book puts a human face on a seminal event that we cannot fully understand. In the past, we have relied on official histories, analytical studies and often turgid regimental histories, none of which provide for the emotions, colours, sights and sounds of battle that Barris' book does. It is a book that I would recommend for professional and amateur alike. **FL**

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY



The Canadian War Museum displayed WWII military vehicles on the General Motors courtyard. This was capped off by a sunset ceremony on the evening of 6 June, 2004. Music was provided by the Pipes and Drums of the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, the only Ottawa military unit to participate in the Normandy assault.

PHOTOS: WO ED STOREY, MAPPING AND CHARTING ESTABLISHMENT



Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of D-Day included several public events held in Ottawa during the weekend of 4-6 June, 2004. The Department of Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with Notre Dame High School, ran a full weekend-long program of living history and re-enactment displays at the high school. As well, a mock battle, reminiscent of the daring capture of "Pegasus Bridge" in Normandy by British Airborne troops, was held at Minto Bridge. Both of these displays with their period uniforms and the noise of gunfire proved popular with the public.



The biggest event was the remembrance parade at the National War Memorial. Military, RCMP, Commissionaire, and Veteran contingents attended the service which was followed by a march-past, which was reviewed by the Governor General. Following the parade, veterans were shuttled back to Notre Dame High School for a government-hosted luncheon.

Similar events will be conducted to mark the 60th Anniversary of VE Day and the opening of the new Canadian War Museum on 5 May, 2005. **■**

– WO Ed Storey