

Battered banner makes way home

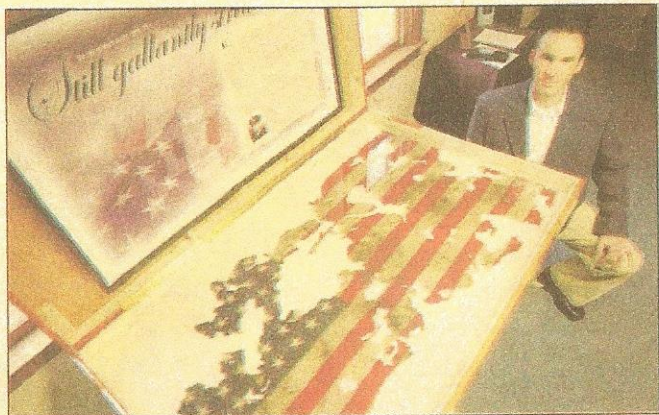
BY STEVE LANDWEHR
STAFF WRITER

IPSWICH — The rockets' red glare seared it, bombs bursting in air shot through it. For eight days in June 1944, Old Glory waved silently over unspeakable carnage, then left the battlefield tucked into a sailor's spare boot.

Now, it's coming home, and for four hours tomorrow, the public will have a chance to view a rare relic from D-Day on Omaha Beach, an American flag presented to a British seaman who was separated from his own troops.

Originally the banner of a Navy amphibious force, the flag will be returned to the Navy on June 6, 2004, the 60th anniversary of D-Day. But tomorrow it will be an honored guest in Ipswich, at the traditional 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, as part of the town's tribute to Veterans Day.

Then it will be marched up the street to the Historical Society's Heard House Museum, where it will be displayed until 4 p.m.



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Peter Coleman kneels next to an American flag that flew over Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Coleman will present the flag to the Navy on the D-Day anniversary next year.

"It's a great, really national treasure," says Peter Coleman of Beverly, who was given the flag by the British sailor's widow following his death. "We're happy to share it."

Time will never heal the wounds in this flag, and maybe that's a good thing. It won't be many years before the other survivors of that bloody day, when Americans at Omaha Beach suffered 60 percent of all Allied casualties, will have joined their fallen comrades, and

the flag will remain as a stark reminder of bravery, madness and death.

A loyal subject

When the largest invasion force ever assembled set out for the Normandy beaches on D-Day, the youngest commander in the Royal Navy was at the helm of a landing-

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FLAG: Battered flag making its way home

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craft repair team. SubLt. Douglas Edmonds was just 18, and in command of LBE 38, a slow, awkward craft that soon fell behind the rest of its flotilla in the rough seas.

In an interview with a British newspaper on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, Edmonds provided a nar-

ative account of the day.

"Charts were in pitifully short supply," Edmonds said. "In order to steer our course, we had to rely on a cutting from the Daily Graphic, a tabloid newspaper of the day."

Edmonds set a course he hoped would bring him and his men to Gold Beach, in the British sector of the invasion. But at 9 a.m., he had a change of heart when he spotted a group of U.S. ships and altered course to join them.

"Unlike some others, I did not want to risk landing single-handed in German-occupied France," Edmonds said.

But when land was sighted at 4 p.m., Edmonds realized they were headed for the western end of Omaha Beach, "the most murderous sector of all, for the Allied forces had failed to knock out the enemy's heavy gun emplacements," Edmonds said.

Drawing his revolver, Edmonds headed LBE 38 toward the beach, where he and his men would remain for the next seven days. The toll that first day was staggering.

"At 7 p.m., a wave of reinforcements arrived, each group adding its blood to the water's edge as it splashed ashore under saturation fire," Edmonds said in the inter-

FLAG VIEWING

What: Display of American Flag that flew over Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944.
Where: Ipswich Historical Society, Heard House Museum, 54 S. Main St., Ipswich.
When: Tuesday, Nov. 11, noon to 4 p.m.
Cost: Free. The society's "A Call to Arms" exhibit will also be on display.

view. "A third wave followed, taking cover under the bodies of their fallen comrades."

Edmonds and his men provided such valuable support during the invasion, a U.S. Navy beachmaster presented him with an American flag that had flown on a U.S. landing craft at the beachhead. Edmonds put it in a spare boot.

After rejoining his own troops, Edmonds served three more years in the Royal Navy, but he knew his life now had a higher purpose.

"When we set sail for Normandy, I was a lad of 18," he said. "That one long day, which was to alter the course of the war, also altered my life. In just 16 hours, my youth was extinguished. I set sail prepared to give my life for the king of England, and I returned resolved to give the rest of my life to the king of kings."

A life of service

Edmonds was true to his word. He became a missionary after the war, and spent the rest of his life performing humanitarian work in South America.

That is where Beverly's Coleman comes into the story. He is the president of Peace and Hope Trust, which since 1991 has raised money to build schools and hire teachers in the poorest parts of Nicaragua.

Edmonds was planning to bring a group of youths to Nicaragua to help build a school in 2001, but died two weeks before he could do so. His widow decided the battle-scarred flag her husband kept all those years should go back to America, and gave

it to Coleman's organization.

Coleman has coordinated the effort to bring the flag full-circle. There's talk of having a commemorative postage stamp produced for the 60th anniversary of D-Day, with the flag as the image. It will be handed over to the Navy on the beach at Little Creek Naval Base in Virginia, with landing craft once again accompanying it.

David Kercher, an Ipswich resident who volunteers at the Historical Society, works with Coleman and knew of the flag.

"He was talking to us one day and asked if we'd be interested in displaying it," said Stefanie Muscat, the society's director.

Muscat jumped at the opportunity. "I don't know if it's the only one, (flag surviving from the invasion), but it's one of a very few," she said.

Last spring, the society opened its "A Call to Arms" exhibit, a collection of artifacts and memoirs of Ipswich residents in wartime. Tomorrow the exhibit will be moved from the upper room where it spent the summer to the first floor of the museum to make it more accessible to veterans.

On the last day the exhibit will be open to the public, the tattered flag will be the centerpiece. It may be the only opportunity for the public to view it locally, since it isn't clear what plans the Navy has for it.

Whatever its future, Muscat said, its past is evident.

"It's clearly been through hell."

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THE LOTTERY

MASSACHUSETTS

Daily Lottery

Nov. 9	7049
Payoffs/exact order		
All 4 digits	\$4,648
First or last 3 digits	.....	\$651
Any 2 digits	.....	\$56
Any 1 digit	.....	\$6
Payoffs/any order		
All 4 digits	.....	\$194
First 3 digits	.....	\$108
Last 3 digits	.....	\$108

Previous numbers

Nov. 8	.....3901	Nov. 5	.....2320
Nov. 7	.....8121	Nov. 4	.....2727
Nov. 6	.....0773	Nov. 3	.....2540

Megabucks

Nov. 8	.....	10-12-22-27-30-42
Nov. 5	.....	6-7-8-25-36-39

Mass Cash

Nov. 7	.....	8-12-15-24-27
Nov. 4	.....	2-8-15-21-28

Mass Millions

Nov. 6	.....	1-25-37-40-45-46
Bonus number	.....	14
Nov. 3	.....	4-11-19-24-27-48
Bonus number	.....	42

Mega Millions

Nov. 7	.....	6-18-23-26-30
Mega Ball: 31		
Nov. 4	.....	16-24-43-44-45
Mega Ball: 22		

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Tri-State Numbers

Nov. 9	7 p.m.	.....	411 and 8383
	1 p.m.	.....	047 and 4391
Nov. 8	7 p.m.	.....	159 and 4840
	1 p.m.	.....	397 and 8355

Tri-State Cash Lotto

Nov. 7	.....	2-4-14-26-Wild 31
Nov. 4	.....	5-12-13-15-Wild 33

Tri-State Megabucks

Nov. 8	.....	7-9-10-13-23-41
Bonus number: 21		
Nov. 5	.....	2-15-20-24-28-41
Bonus number: 30		
Hot Lotto		
Nov. 8	.....	14-15-17-19-34
Hot Ball: 12		
Nov. 5	.....	3-6-23-28-30

WHAT'S OPEN, CLOSED

Veterans Day

Tuesday

BUSINESS	MASS.	N.H.
Banks	Closed	Some closed
Stores	Most open	Open
Businesses	Most closed	Most open
Federal govt.	Closed	Closed
State govt.	Closed	Closed
Local govt.	Closed	Closed
Post offices	Closed	Closed

The Eagle-Tribune will publish a morning edition. The business office will be open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and the circulation offices will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Transportation. There will be no local bus service or EZTrans service by the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority. Trombly Commuter Service, the Methuen-Boston commuter bus line, will run regular service. The MBTA will offer regular weekly commuter rail service.

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BANKRUPTCY
Chapter 7