

Dear friends, British and American, Elected Representatives, Veterans and colour bearers. Welcome.

On this day, June 13th 1944 a plane crashed along the road to Mesnil- Rave. The pilot was Lt Perkins of 354th fighter group. This morning Lt Perkins known as "Bill" had seen a German concentration at "point U". Four planes led by "Bill" Perkins attacked and strafed the position. Even though an excellent pilot, instructor he collided with an electric pole and the roof of a building. His remains were recovered and his body was interred in this cemetery at Notre Dame de Cenilly. He now rests in the cemetery at St James.

In 1997 a veteran from the same squadron, Charles Simonson, came to unveil a plaque in his memory. Also M. Joret the owner of the building has also placed a plaque on the building at "Mesnil- Rave.

The nephew of Bill Perkins, Jon Teboe, has been given a trunk belonging to his uncle. This contained his personal diary, and an unfinished treasure of writings. Researching his uncle he has visited the area and decided to make a documentary film about, Lt Perkins, who had wanted to be a writer.

We also commemorate to day the liberation of the canton and surrounding district by the 2nd Armored Division. We have a plaque which was unveiled by Captain Martin Evans of the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment in 2004.

To day we have members of the Nelson and Googins families as well as Marty Morgan who are visiting our town from the United States. Steven Nelson is curator of a military museum in California, and is related Lt Colonel Richard E Nelson who's armored column liberated the village on the evening of 27th July.1944 From the turret of his tank he mowed down many German soldiers who were running out of the church, with a .50cal machine gun.

In the village 3 civillians were killed and 13 injured.

The town was secured while other units made recon parols as far as St-Denis-le-Vetu, Trelly and Hambye securing the bridges along the Sienne River.

The following Day 28th July 1944. daylight found the village and the surrounding country full of armored vehicles with white stars. A command H.Q.

was set up in the village, and the tanks of Lt.Col. Nelson fanned out into the network of dirt roads, and lanes. It was this morning that Lt.Col Nelson was killed while stood in the turret of his M3 light tank. The afternoon brings a number of fire fights at Pont Brocard, Cerisy la Salle and St Martin, as the Germans were trying to retreat towards Hambye. During this fighting 5 soldiers from section E/41 are seriously wounded one of which is Pvt. Joseph Q. Googings. His son who is president of the Maine Military Museum is here with us today.

Combat continued into the 29th July at cross roads that were blocking the retreat. La Pompe , Pinetière and Valtolaine. Then later a confused battle took place at St Denis le Gast, Lengronne ,and at the aptly named "land of the Dead near Grimesmil. During the 3 days of fighting more than 50 U.S. Soldiers lost their lives. The battles here were reported by Robert Capa in the New York Times on the 30th July,... "piles of Germans dead lay in the streets and bodies were spread behind almost every house in the town"... After the events of the three days prisoners, many being notorious "Das Reich" S.S. and elite paras, were caged in the school yard of Notre Dame. Roncey was in the middle of the retreat, "a pocket", and was heavily bombed, by air attack, destroying some 400 vehicles, as well as many houses.

Over the years we in Notre Dame have had the honour to receive many veterans of the Hell on Wheels 2nd Armored Division. Many are no longer with us however this memorial is to remind future generations of their sacrifice in liberating Notre Dame and our country.

The organisation "Lest we Forget 1944" takes an active part in disseminating knowledge and keeping the memory of the sacrifice made by those who came to free France.

Thank you all.