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75th Anniversary of D-Day

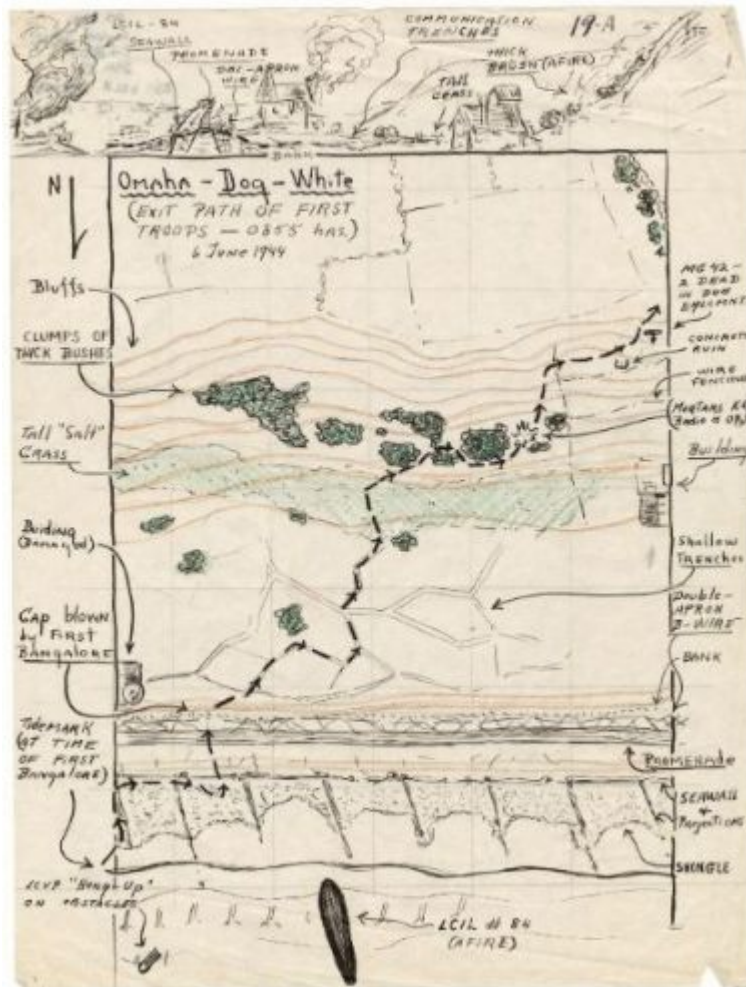
This year marks 75 years since the invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, more commonly known as D-Day.



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower gives the order of the day, "Full victory, nothing less," to paratroopers somewhere in England just before they board their planes to take part in the first assault of the invasion of France. ([National Archives Identifier 12003938](#))

On June 6, 1944, in one of the most well-remembered moments of World War II, American,

British, and Canadian forces stormed the 50-mile stretch of coastline in northwest France in the largest seaborne invasion in history: 150,000 troops, 7,000 ships, and over 13,000 aircraft were involved. Twenty-four thousand soldiers descended by air, the rest by sea.



Omaha-Dog-White, Exit Path of First Troops, 0855 Hrs., 6/6/1944. ([National Archives Identifier 6922052](#))

An amphibious landing would not have been possible without the invention of the landing craft, vehicle, personnel (LCVP), also known as the Higgins boat. The patent is dated February 15, 1944 – less than four months before D-Day. On D-Day, Higgins boats transported troops from the 1st Infantry onto Omaha Beach. Each boat could carry 36 combat-equipped infantrymen or 8,000 pounds of cargo. In all, 23,398 Higgins boats were produced during the war.

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Print of drawing as
originally filed

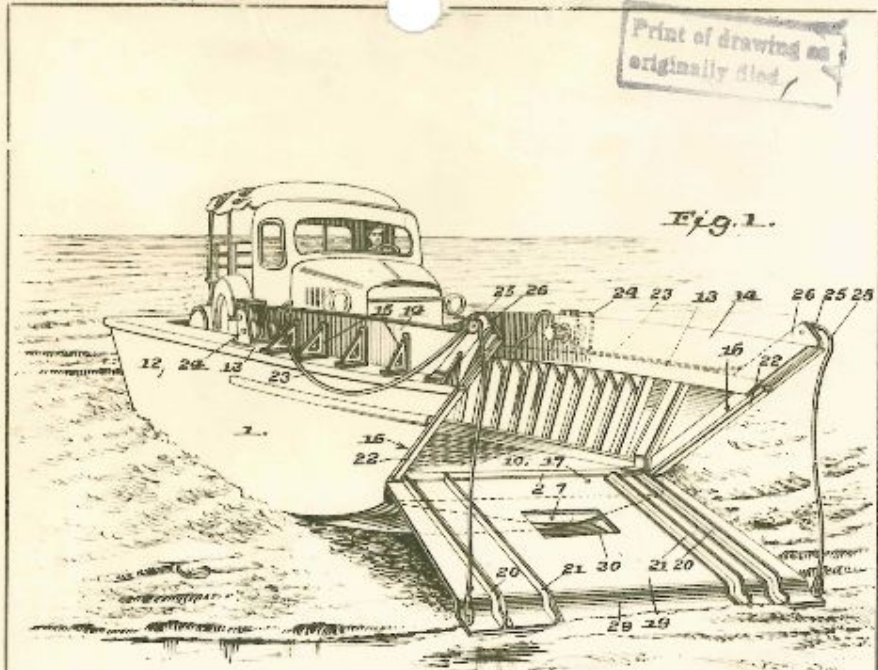


Fig. 1.

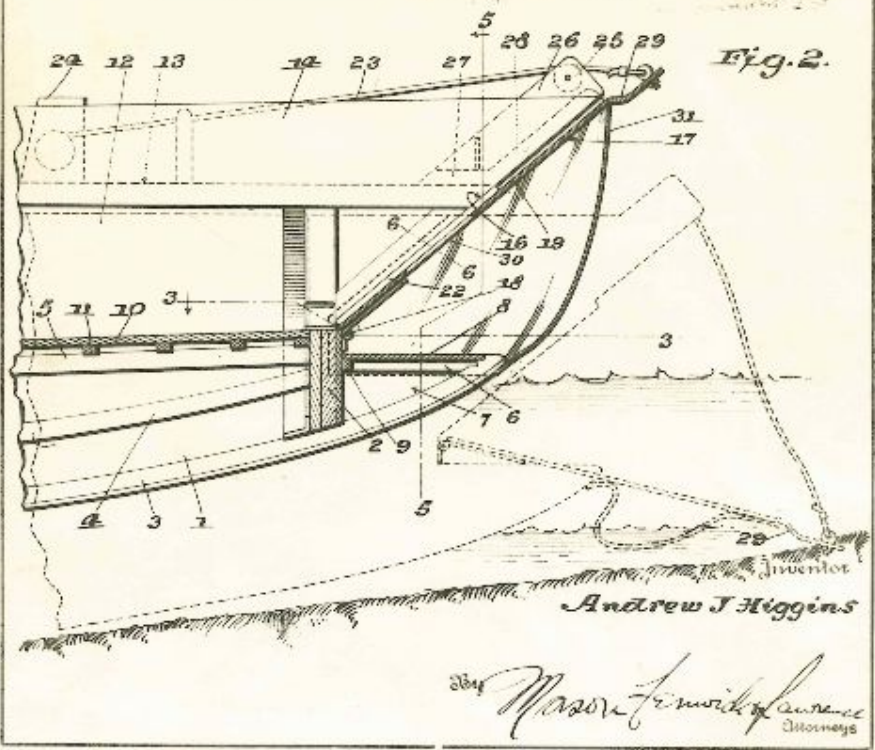


Fig. 2.

Inventor
Andrew J Higgins

By Mason, Finckel & Lawrence
Attorneys

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Today, D-Day is remembered by many as the beginning of the end of World War II, but in the predawn hours of that pivotal day, success was not assured. After years of fighting and strategic planning, the stakes were enormous for the supreme command of the Allied Expeditionary Force and the more than 160,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen who crossed the English Channel that day.



Five Soldiers of the 413th AAA Gun Battalion Near Omaha Beach, 6/12/1944. ([National Archives Identifier 6788422](#))

This combat account was made by the seven survivors of Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment—one of the few companies to actually land where planned on D-Day. The landing craft approached a beach untouched by aerial or naval bombardment and dropped their landing ramps. Instantly, the soldiers inside “were enveloped in a crossing of automatic fire.”

Only one-third of the company made it to the protection of the seawall. You can read the full account in the Catalog:

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These notes were prepared by G6 with seven survivors of the company.
There were no disagreements over facts. The places of landing, as marked on the drawings, were readily pointed out by the men. There was no disagreement.

When the company was still 5000 yds out, the men saw the barrage from the rocket boats striking the water about 1000 yards to their right front. They saw nothing hit on their beach or anywhere near it. "A" came on in 6 assault boats. As they drew to within 700-800 yards of the beach, arty and mortar fire began to fall among the boats. There had already been loss; one boat foundered 1000 yards out from shipping to much water; one man had drowned and the others had been picked up by naval craft. At first the enemy shell fire was ineffective but as the first boats drew to within 50 yards of the sand, one was struck by an arty shell and two men were mortally hit, the others sinking to the water.

The men reconnoitered that they were coming straight into the designated landing point. They were at the sides looking toward the enemy shore. What they saw was an absolutely unsheltered beach, unspotted by arty or bomb fire and wholly barren of shrubbery or any other cover. The first ramps were dropped at 0635 in water that was waist-deep to over a man's head. As if this had been the signal for which the enemy waited, the ramps were instantly enveloped in a crossing of automatic fire which was accurate and in great volume. It came at the boats from both ends of the beach. "A" had planned to move in three files from each boat, center file going first, then flank files moving off to right and left. The first man tried it. They crumpled as they swung from the ship, forward into the water. Then order was lost. It seemed to the men then that the only way to get ashore with a chance for safety was to dive head-first into the water. (Pvt Howard L. Grosser) A few had jumped off, trying to follow the SW, and had gone down in water over their heads. They were around the boat now, struggling with their equipment and trying to keep afloat. In one of the boats, a third of the men had become engaged in this struggle to save themselves from a quick drowning. (Pfc Gilbert S. Burdock) That army were lost before they had a chance to face the enemy. Some of them were hit in the water and wounded. Some drowned then. Others, wounded, dragged themselves ashore and upon finding the sands, lay quiet and gave themselves up, only to be caught and drowned within a few minutes by the on-rushing tide. (Burdock) But some men moved safely through the bullet fire to the sands, then found that they could not hold there; they went back into the water and used it as cover, only their hands sticking out above it. Others sought the cover of under-water structures. Many were shot while so doing. Those who survived kept moving shoreward with the tide and in this way finally made their landing. (Burdock and Pfc Leo J. Nash) They were still in this life-or-death movement when "B" came in behind them. (Pvt Grosser) Others who had gotten into the sands and had burrowed in, remained in their holes until the tide caught up to them, then they, too, joined the men in the water. (Grosser)

Within 7-10 minutes after the ramps had dropped, "A" had become inert, leaderless and almost incapable of action. The company was entirely bereft of officers, and almost completely without men. The company was entirely bereft of officers, and almost completely without men. The company was entirely bereft of officers, and almost completely without men. The company was entirely bereft of officers, and almost completely without men.

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give Nash an order. Nash saw him bleeding from the throat and heard his words: "Advance with the wire cutters!" It was futile. Nash had no wire cutters, and in giving the order, Tidrick had made himself a target for just an instant, and Nash saw as bullets cleave him from head to pelvis. German machine gunners along the cliff directly ahead were now firing straight down into the party. Captain Taylor J. Tallers and Lieut Benjamin E. Kaurfort had come in with 30 men from "A" aboard LGA 1015, but what happened to that boat team in detail will never be known. Every man was killed; most of the bodies were found along the beach.

In those first 5-10 confused minutes when the men were fighting the water, dropping their arms and even their helmets to save themselves from drowning, and learning by what they saw that their landing had deteriorated into a struggle for personal survival, every argument was either killed or wounded. It seemed to the others that enemy snipers had spotted their leaders and had directed their fire so as to exterminate them. A medical boat team came in on the right of Tidrick's boat. The Germans machine-gunned every man in the section. (Nash) Their bodies floated with the tide. By this time the leaderless infantrymen had forgone any attempt to get forward against the enemy and where men moved at all, their efforts were directed toward trying to save any of their comrades they could reach. The men in the water pushed wounded men ahead of them so as to get them ashore. (Grosser and Burdock) Those who had reached the sands crowded back and forth into the water, pulling men to the land to save them from drowning, in many cases, only to have them about out their hands or to be hit themselves while in these exertions. The weight of the infantry equipment handicapped all of this rescue work. If left unhelped, the wounded drowned because of it. The able-bodied who pulled them in stripped themselves of equipment so that they could move more freely in the water, then cut away the assault jackets and the equipment of the wounded, and dropped them in the water. (Grosser, Burdock and Pfc Edward H. Garry.) Within 30 minutes of striking the beach, "A" had ceased to be an assault company and had become a forlorn little rescue party bent on survival and the saving of lives. Orders were no longer being given by anyone; each man had remained about moved or not as he saw fit. The leading hand in the rescue work, by the account of all survivors, was a first-aid man, W/S Tom Brasdin.

It is estimated by the men that one-third of "A" remained by the time "B" hit the beach. One hour and 40 minutes after the landing, six men from the boat which had landed on the far right flank (Boat No 32) six men from "A" had worked up to the edge of the cliff. They saw no others from the company who had advanced as far. (Nash) Two of the men, Pfc Shefer and Loveloy, joined a group from the Second Rangers, who were assaulting over the cliff to the right of "A", and fought with them through the day. Otherwise, "A's" contribution to the attack appears to have been a cypher. The few survivors stayed at the cliff bottom during the afternoon and joined the Bn that night.

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116-A on D-Day. ([National Archives Identifier 596372](#))

The National Archives has many records related to D-Day and its surrounding events, revealing the determination, endurance, and sacrifice of the Allied forces that made D-Day the triumph we celebrate today.

For more D-Day records, resources, and stories:

- See the online exhibit "[D-Day and the Normandy Invasion](#)" from the National Archives on Google Arts & Culture.
- Research [Records Related to D-Day](#) at the National Archives.
- Read [Pieces of History: 75th Anniversary of D-Day](#)
- Learn the story of [Maj. Philip Gage](#), who jumped from a C-47 transport plane into the pitch black sky over Normandy in the early hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the invasion of Normandy we are having a special [D-Day document display](#) in the [East Rotunda Gallery](#) of the National Archives in Washington, DC, from May 23, 2019 – July 2, 2019.

#19ForThe19th Instagram Challenge

Do you like learning about awesome women in history? Are you looking to share stories of women who have inspired you? In celebration of our new exhibit, Rightfully Hers, and the passing of the 19th Amendment—which prohibited the states from denying the vote on the basis of sex—we've put together 19 weekly prompts to get us talking about amazing women in history.



Harlingen Army Air Field, Texas--Elizabeth L. Gardner of Rockford, Illinois, WASP (Women's Airforce Service Pilot) pilot, takes a look around before sending her plane streaking down the runway at the air base. ([National Archives Identifier 542191](#))

Join in on [Instagram](#) by following [#19ForThe19th](#) as we share women who have inspired us, and then use the hashtag yourself to let us know who inspires you. We'll be posting every Wednesday until October 9. Join us or follow along with [#19forthe19th](#)- we can't wait to learn with you!

#19FOR THE 19TH

INSTAGRAM CHALLENGE

19 weeks of
amazing women
in history
to celebrate the
passing of the
19th Amendment.



#RIGHTFULLYHERS
NATIONAL ARCHIVES



June 5 • Hidden Heroines
June 12 • Women in Uniform
June 19 • Women Abolitionists
June 26 • Women in Government
July 3 • Founding Mothers
July 10 • Women in the Arts
July 17 • Play Like A Girl
July 24 • Accessibility Advocates
July 31 • Women Adventurers
Aug 7 • Fierce Female Friendships
Aug 14 • Frontier Women
Aug 21 • Women of STEM
Aug 28 • Defenders of Human Rights
Sept 4 • Mothers of Invention
Sept 11 • Female First Responders
Sept 18 • Outspoken Women
Sept 25 • Women in Lit
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