



# ACTION THIS DAY

The Museum of WWII • Boston

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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

# D-DAY • JUNE 6, 1944

*The 70th Anniversary of the invasion of Europe*

Only one subject dominated everyone's mind 70 years ago: not when would America, Britain and Canada invade France but where on the coast the most decisive and critical battle of World War II would take place. Josef Stalin had pushed Roosevelt and Churchill for two years to open the Second Front to relieve the enormous German attack against the Soviet Union by forcing Hitler to divert his armies to France. Churchill didn't want to attack

across the English Channel; he argued with the Americans to attack the Mediterranean Coast of southern France which he believed would be much less costly. The American military never wavered from the Channel invasion: the only question, the question preoccupying Adolph Hitler every waking moment, and causing him many sleepless nights, was where.

*Special Exhibition continued on next page*



## *Eisenhower's Message to the Troops*

*"Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!*

*"You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. ....*

*I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!"*



A leader of deliberate conduct, Winston Churchill would attach a bright red sticker emblazoned with the words: "Action This Day" to his memos to prioritize and make clear to his subordinates that he expected specific action that day.

**ACTION THIS DAY**

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## SPECIAL EXHIBITION

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### D-DAY • JUNE 6, 1944

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The most colossal deception of the war caused Hitler to believe it was directly across the Channel at its narrowest point. A completely fictitious American Army group, under command of George Patton, convinced Hitler the actual landings in Normandy were a diversion. Hitler held back his forces which allowed the Allies to gain a beachhead. The American landings on Omaha Beach were precarious enough without the German reserves.

There was no guess work on the part of the Allies. In the crucial report written on July 15, 1943. British General Frank Morgan, Chief of Staff to Eisenhower, concluded, “[W]e may be assured of a reasonable chance of success on 1st May 1944 only if we concentrate our efforts on an assault across the NORMAN beaches about BAYEUX.” That original letter is part of the Museum’s Special D-Day Exhibit.

The Museum’s archives contain the most comprehensive collection of British and American plans for the invasion. Many of these will be on

display, along with a selection of original photographs taken on D-Day, together with reconnaissance photos from water level and by aircraft.

The Museum’s completely original Higgins Boat LCVP (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel), one of less than ten known to have survived, will be on view, during the special exhibition.

Undoubtedly because the image of men landing on Omaha Beach was so seared in my mind, it was the first area of collecting artifacts I concentrated on. At the time of the 50th anniversary I acquired the Omaha Beach Museum, a private museum whose owner thought the interest would fall off and he wouldn’t be able to afford to keep it going. It was the proverbial gold mine — everything in the museum had been collected by the owner right there (in Villeneuve) — and forms the Normandy Invasion section of the Museum today.

Throughout America there will be many news stories about the heroes of D-Day, but every surviving soldier will all say the same thing – they weren’t heroes; the heroes are in the famed American cemetery at Omaha Beach. No exhibit, no news stories can ever give a sense of all the good in the world that depended on the success of the D-Day invasion of Europe. It was a day that saved the world from evil. ***The exhibition opens May 6 and runs until August 30.***



## NEW ACQUISITION

# THE 27 WOMEN PILOTS

*Who Raised the Hopes and Expectations for All*

Twenty-seven women — the number seems inconceivable today — proved to the Army Air Force that experienced civilian women pilots could ferry military planes and relieve men for combat flying. This experimental group of pioneering women (WAFS—Womens Auxiliary Ferrying Service) in the Fall of 1942 led the way for the formation of the Womens Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in the summer of 1943 when more than 1,000 female pilots came into the service

Kathryn “Sis” Bernheim learned to fly in 1934 and by the time of Pearl Harbor was a partner in a flying school at Roosevelt Field on Long Island. Civilian flying on the Eastern Seaboard virtually ended with the start of the war and Bernheim became the 26th woman accepted for this newly formed group (which was created partly at the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt). A minimum of 500 hours of flight experience was established but the 27 women averaged more than 1,100 hours each.

The WAFSs were based in Wilmington, Delaware, and ferried planes from factories to air bases and embarkation centers throughout the country. Bernheim qualified to fly pursuit, cargo and training aircraft, but said in later interviews that the P-47 Thunderbolt was her favorite. While women did not fly in combat, she had more than her share of forced landings from equipment failures and thunderstorms in the Midwest. It was, she said, “the most exciting time” of her life.

The women could prove themselves in the cockpit, but it wasn’t enough for politics and at the end of 1944, the WASPS were disbanded because, in the words of their commanding general, “higher authorities” had made the decision. Equality was more elusive than pilot competence; the Air Force refused to recognize the women as veterans and they received no benefits until 1977 (a full 33 years later) when a bill in Congress finally declared what they had known their entire lives – that they had served their country to their utmost in the desperate days of World War II, and that their focused performance of their duty was as important as their male counterparts.



*Kathryn Bernheim (top and far left) and fellow pilots, Flight jacket, and dress uniform belonging to Kathryn Bernheim.*

# “THE POWER OF WORDS AND IMAGES IN A WORLD AT WAR”

“The Power of Words and Images in a World at War,” an exhibition of over 200 documents, letters, posters, leaflets and propaganda, from the Museum’s collection, opens at the Grolier Club in New York City (47 East 60th Street) on Wednesday, May 14th (through Saturday, August 2nd)

The power of words and images reached new heights during World War II because the warring nations were led by men with great oratorical skills. Advancements in technology, especially the radio (for carrying speeches directly into homes and for transmitting quality photographs at high speed across continents) assisted in the effective dissemination of propaganda. Leaders in the U.S, Great Britain and Germany understood that people’s emotions and morale are at the heart of social and political movements. The good and the evil were driven by what was said, how it was said and how it was visualized. Alone or together, words and images were so powerful they could stand alone, requiring no further explanation.

In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s description of December 7, 1941, as “a day which will live in infamy” roused American support for the war, and



his fireside chats reassured Americans in desperate times. The flag-raising on Iwo Jima, arguably the most famous photograph of the war, inspired a depressed American home front, dejected by the endless war in the Pacific over islands no one ever heard of, against an enemy no one understood, who thought the victory over Germany ended World War II.

For the Allies, red flags with black swas-

tikas became iconic representations of Germany’s embrace of conformity and evil; in Japan, magazine illustrations of the delicate Japanese arts stand in sharp contrast to photographs of the Dai Nippon forces triumphantly standing on the rubble of China; Russian posters featured graphic images in lieu of text, the better to rally a semi-literate population against the far better trained, and better equipped, German juggernaut.

The ultimate Power of Words and Images was in the speeches of Winston Churchill. Probably the greatest orator ever, Churchill’s words inspired a desperate nation facing obliteration or surrender and subjugation. Some of his most famous words are seen on the posters in this exhibition. Churchill influenced Hitler as well; his aides wrote after the war that Der Fuhrer was shaken by Churchill’s statements about fighting on the beaches, in the streets, in the fields; he was unnerved by Churchill’s “We shall never surrender.” He knew he had met more than his match in oratorical inspiration. Other Nazi leaders thought of Churchill’s speeches as bluster; Hitler understood all too well the power of words and images in a world at war.

## News from The Museum of WWII ★ Boston



### WWII IN THE NEWS & MOVIES

It is fairly accurate to say that every day *The New York Times* and/or the *Wall St. Journal* have an article, book or movie review based on World War II. *The Railway Man* starring Colin Firth (the King in *The King’s Speech*) is presently getting decent reviews. Firth (the Railway Man) relives his horrible experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese. Scenes are interwoven with his life and struggles after the war. Prisoners who survived could not escape the nightmares of what they had been through.

The Museum of World War II has an extensive collection from Japanese prisons consisting of letters, diaries, journals, clubs for beating prisoners, eating utensils made from anything at hand, and other crudely made artifacts. Everyone and everything that survived is a miracle in itself and will be part of a special exhibition later in 2014.



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