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D-Day vet returns to Sainte-Mere Eglise

By Keith Barnes
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When Delmar Boswell first visited Sainte-Mere-Eglise, France, it was at midnight June 6, 1944, and he came in using a parachute.

He visited the same town again recently, except this time it was by car, and he was accompanied by cheers, plus there were no German soldiers shooting at him like the first time.

On June 6, the 65th anniversary of D-Day, Boswell returned to Sainte-Mere Eglise where he was one of 38 Americans to receive the French Legion of Honor Medal, France's highest distinction.

The award was bestowed upon the men by French President

Nicolas Sarkozy to thank them for helping to liberate France from Nazi oppression with the Normandy invasion in 1944.

Boswell travelled from his home in Colorado Springs, Colo., recently to visit Wilson relatives and while here was happy to talk about his military career and his recent honor.

Boswell, born in Wilson Oct. 8, 1923, joined the National Guard during his senior year at Charles L. Coon High School and after graduation was called to active duty in September 1940.

He was assigned to a heavy weapons company and was training at Fort Jackson when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, beginning

America's entry into World War II.

In June, 1942, his military career took a different turn after he saw an airborne demonstration jump.

"I found out I could get \$50 more per month (much better than \$30 he was getting), so I signed up," he said. Following airborne training at Fort Benning, Ga., he joined the 505th parachute infantry regiment and was sent to Fort Bragg as part of the 82nd Airborne Division.

For the next couple of years he was involved in combat jumps over Casablanca, Sicily, Africa and Naples, Italy, along with training in Ireland and England as preparation for D-Day.

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Boswell was among the 25,000 troops that parachuted in behind enemy lines over France at midnight prior to the early morning D-Day invasion at Normandy.

He said the basic mission was to get a foothold and prevent German troops from using inland crossroads and bridges while making them accessible to the allied troops.

"We jumped five miles in from the beaches at Sainte-Mere-Eglise and probably lost 50 percent of our troops," he said.

Following the Normandy invasion, Boswell was also involved in the Battle of the Bulge along with other battles in both France and Germany until the war ended in May 1945.

After returning to the states, he was assigned to Fort Bragg where his request for re-enlistment was denied, although he was allowed back in one year

later as a staff sergeant.

He trained until 1948 when he applied for officer candidate school and was commissioned a second lieutenant.

After Boswell got orders for Okinawa, the Korean War broke out, and he was involved in fierce fighting, suffering a mortar shell injury that basically ended his combat capabilities.

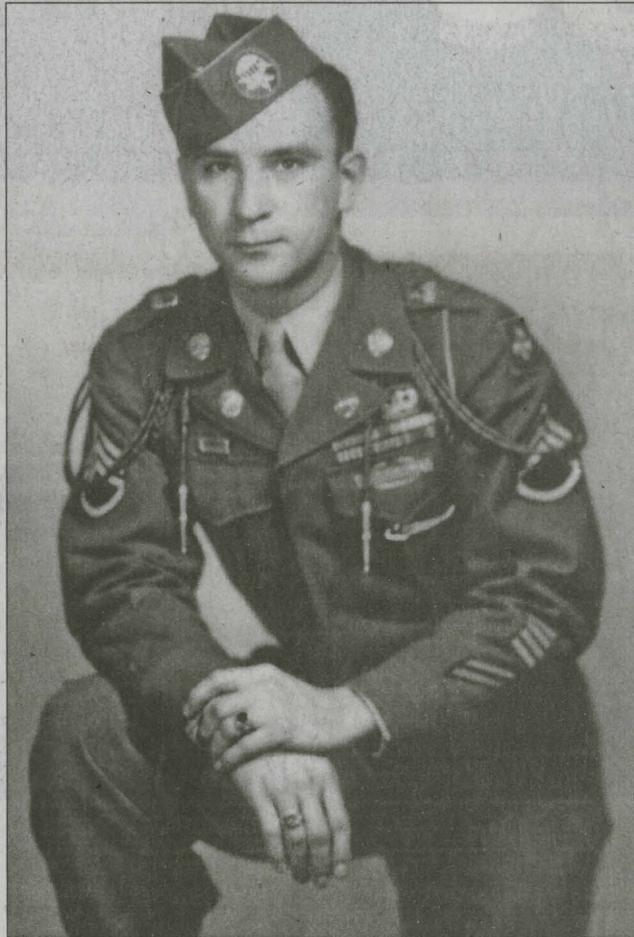
Following months of recuperating, he chose to stay in the Army, finally retiring from active duty in 1963 with the rank of major.

He returned to college and got his degree in elementary education, after which he taught school in Colorado Springs for 20 years.

Boswell said returning to Sainte-Mere-Eglise was a crowning point of his career, and it was good to reunite with other members of his original group of soldiers.

"It was great," he said "and made me feel proud that whatever we had done was remembered."

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Delmar Boswell displays the document for the French Legion of Honor medal he recently received in France.

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