



# CORBEN COURIER

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The Chapter 93 monthly meeting will be held at **7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 20, 2008**, at our Chapter clubroom, Blackhawk Field, Cottage Grove, WI. We will show an outstanding 20-minute DVD, narrated by **Harrison Ford** and titled *Oshkosh - The Spirit of Aviation*. It's really worth watching.



## IKE AT D-DAY

From the December 2007 issue of *The Smithsonian*.

*We pick up the story from the February Courier, -where Eisenhower has to decide when to launch the invasion.*

Nearly five minutes passed, and then Eisenhower said in a low voice, "I am quite positive we must give the order... I don't like it, but there it is... I don't see how we can do anything else." Then he stood up and walked to the door. The order had been given.

The invasion would take place on the sixth of June. When asked what kind of generals he liked, Napoleon is said to have replied, "Lucky ones." Nobody in the room could have known it, but luck was about to strike Eisenhower.

Across the English Channel, the Germans were suffering, once again, from the difficulties of the Luftwaffe. Unlike the British and the Americans, the Germans had no aircraft that could safely patrol the Atlantic beyond Iceland to report on the weather. As a result, the high-pressure front that Stagg had reported to Eisenhower was unknown to them. Their meteorological forecast was for the bad weather to continue uninterrupted through June 6 and beyond — poor visibility, low cloud cover, rain, high winds, a heavy swell at sea, and strong surf on the French beaches.

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt concluded that nobody in his right mind would order an invasion as long as the weather remained bad. That being the case, he set off with his immediate staff for a four-day inspection tour, and allowed Field Marshal Rommel to take a few days of leave. Rommel wished to spend his wife's birthday, June 6, with her in

Germany, and he left early in the morning of June 4 in his Horch touring car, sitting in front, with his chauffeur, Daniel, at the wheel and two of his staff officers seated behind him. His birthday present for his beloved Lucie was beside him on the seat: a pair of elegant suede shoes he had bought in Paris — for even in the fourth year of the German occupation, Paris remained the center of haute couture, the place where everybody who could afford to do so still came to buy shoes, gloves, perfume, hats and lingerie. Even the commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division, Gen. Edgar Feuchtinger, a fanatic Nazi and a particular favorite of Adolf Hitler's, decided that it would be safe to spend the nights of June 5 and 6 in Paris with his mistress.

As for the Fuhrer, he too was taking a vacation, at his home in Berchtesgaden, high above the Obersalzberg, accompanied by his staff and his mistress, Eva Braun.

Eisenhower's tiny trailer bedroom was littered with ashtrays and paperback westerns — virtually his only form of relaxation. Having made his decision, he left his commanders at Southwick House to get on with implementing it and went back to the trailer for a few hours of sleep. He was not the kind of man to waste time second-guessing himself once a decision was made.

All over Britain, the decision that Eisenhower had made at 9:45 had triggered a frenzy of activity. RAF bombers were revving up their engines to strike vital targets in France, while all across southern England, thousands of transport aircraft had to be given last-minute checks, as well as the gliders aligned in long rows, just so, with their long towlines arranged in a zigzag pattern in front of them; everywhere ground: crews worked through the night, loading bombs, rockets and long belts of ammunition into combat aircraft - the belts of .50-caliber ammunition for the heavy machine guns of the American bombers were 27 feet long (whence the expression "the whole nine yards"). Troops moved south by rail and truck toward the embarkation ports, following a complicated schedule that would take them and their equipment in phases to the beaches once these had been secured on D-Day. The British midget submarines that had been in place off the beaches, resting on the sea bottom since June 4 — their crews now suffering from cramps, exhaustion and lack of air inside the tiny crowded hulls - were given, at last, the order to surface before dawn on June 6 and raise a telescopic mast with a



*As D-Day loomed, Ike sought advice from British prime minister Churchill.*

signal light, to mark the boundaries of the five invasion beaches for 7,000 ships in five separate fleets. Eisenhower woke early in the morning of June 5 to the familiar sound of rain and wind. He had slept soundly, but apparently the thought that the invasion might fail was on his mind, for the moment he was dressed, he sat down at his little desk in the trailer and wrote out a kind of brief aide-memoire of what he would tell the news correspondents if it did. This is one of the most extraordinary documents of the war, dignified, modest and truthful. Eisenhower takes on himself full responsibility for the failure:

*Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air, and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone.* He folded the piece of paper carefully, put

in one of the breast pockets of his short uniform jacket (already known as an Eisenhower jacket) and buttoned the flap. It was there if needed - he would not be at a loss for what to say if the worst happened. Then he went off to a final, last-minute briefing, at which Stagg gave yet another cautiously optimistic weather forecast.

Eisenhower spent most of the day in his trailer, receiving a steady stream of what were beginning to be called VAP visitors - among them Churchill and Gen. Charles DeGaulle. The rain slowly diminished, the cloud cover began to lighten and the wind dropped.

In late afternoon, Eisenhower decided to visit the airborne troops, who would soon be loading up. It was about them that Eisenhower had the sharpest concern. Nobody had ever attempted a night drop on this scale before, and Leigh-Mallory had predicted that casualties might be as high as 80 percent. From the beginning, Eisenhower had insisted on the airborne drops, despite the possibility of catastrophic losses, since these drops were the only way to secure both flanks of the invasion during the first few crucial hours,

Summersby drove Eisenhower to two more of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne's airfields, but then there was no time left to continue, so she drove him back to Greenham Common to watch the aircraft there take off. It was dark now, but an American correspondent saw tears running down Eisenhower's cheeks as he watched, one after another, the C-47s roll down the runway and vanish into the night. On the way back to Southwick in the car, he said to Summersby, "I hope to God I know what I'm doing."

At 6:30 in the morning, underwater demolition engineers ("frogmen") began to demolish the mined obstacles that protected the beaches, and the first "swimming tanks" were already going onshore to support the infantry. By 7, the assault troops in the first wave were beginning to wade through waist-high water onto the beaches, while overhead a fearsome naval bombardment - the heaviest in history - began to pound German defenses from Cabourg on the left to Quineville on the right. A German officer reported back to his headquarters that he was looking at "ten thousand ships," and was warned not to exaggerate; but gradually, as the full extent of what was happening made its way up the German communications system, doubt was extinguished except at the very top.

Field Marshal von Rundstedt, breakfasting at his headquarters outside Paris, still thought that the landings were a diversion, and that the real invasion would take place in the Pas de Calais, though he took the precaution of alerting two of four Panzer divisions. Hitler was asleep in Berchtesgaden; his naval aide decided not to wake him until more information was available. Field Marshal Rommel was home in Herrlingen, and in the confusion nobody thought to call him until 10:15AM. He alone understood at once that this was not a diversion, but the real thing - the invasion he had been preparing for. "How stupid of me," he repeated as his aide gave him the details over the phone. By 1:00 in the afternoon, he was in his car on the way back to France, urging his driver to - *Tempo! Tempo! Tempo!* (Faster! Faster! Faster!) he called out, as the big Horch sped down the road.

Cautiously, the most Ike would say was that the landings were going "fairly well"; but at 9:33 in the morning, he at last ordered his press aide, Col. Ernest Dupuy, to announce, "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France."

Characteristically, Ike did not make the announcement himself, but this made no difference - around the world, people stopped what they were doing to listen to the radio. In Britain, work ceased and men and women stood and sang "God Save the King" spontaneously. In Philadelphia, the Liberty Bell was rung, and church bells rang out in jubilation all across the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. In America, so many people called friends and families to tell them the news that telephone switchboards were jammed across the nation. In the House of Commons, Churchill artfully keeping the members in suspense as he told them of the liberation of Rome, said, at last, "I have also to announce to the House that during the night and the early hours of this morning, the first of the series of landings in force upon the European continent has taken place - in this case the liberating assault fell upon the coast of France." He went on to say, "There is a brotherhood in arms between us and our friends of the United States... There is complete confidence in the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower." From all over the world - except, as Churchill would say, "in the abodes of the wicked" - congratulations poured in. Even Stalin cabled, "It brings joy to us all." The normally staid *London Times* commented, "At last, the tension has broken."

*Eisenhower was vindicated in his belief that an airborne operation was critical to the success of D-Day. Some 18,000 paratroopers were dropped overnight behind German lines to secure the flanks, enabling the invasion to go forward. Although the nearly 80 percent casualty predictions did not materialize, some 3,700 of the 23,000 airborne troops sent into combat on the night of June 5 and on D-Day itself were killed, wounded or missing.*

As for the men who made the initial assault on the beaches of Normandy: total Allied losses that day have never been totally confirmed, but appear to have been more than 10,000, with American losses, including the paratroopers, totaling 6,577.

## AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION



This month's really sharp looking single-seat homebuilt is one of a family of planes from a well-known stable. Its nickname is a word often used in Hollywood for newcomers. What company offers the kit and what's its designation?

Last month's airplane was the Convair Sea Dart. Three were built; one crashed tragically, one is at the entrance to the Sand Diego Balboa Park Museum, and the third is displayed at Sun'n Fun in Lakeland, Florida.

*"You've never been lost until you've been lost at Mach 3."*

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

**Chapter 93 Membership Meeting, February 21, 2008** Bob Ward had surgery and is recovering very well. He still has some limitations, but can help anyone in the advisory capacity.

**Don Ripp** announced that March 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be an Ultralight and Lightsport Safety Seminar at Wisconsin Rapids. Don passed some information about a Boeing 40C airplane that is being built and nearly completed in Spokane, Washington.

Next year's Chapter Annual Banquet will be held at Rex's Innkeeper in Waunakee on February 7, 2009. This year's Young Eagles Rally will be held in June during the annual Brat & Bean Fly-in.

**Neil Robinson** won this month's door prize. Our own **Bill Rewey** was our guest speaker this month. Thank you, bill, for sharing your lengthy flying experiences with the members of the Chapter.

### Chapter 93 Board Meeting, March 6, 2008

There was more discussion about the Chapter's Annual Banquet and possible speakers for the banquet. We talked about this year's membership totals and possible reasons for the decline in membership.

The roof still seems to be leaking and started discussing more alternatives to remedy the leaky roof problem. We also talked about the possibility of buying one or two used port-a-potties to be used during events at the airport instead of renting the units that the Chapter needed.

And last, but not least, we also discussed that postage is going to be going up again and the amount of money that the Chapter uses to mail the newsletter out. We would like to e-mail the newsletter to the people who have e-mail accounts and cut down on the postage cost. If you would be willing to get the newsletter this way, please give your e-mail address to **Jerry Matzelle**. If you don't have an e-mail account or really don't want to receive the newsletter by e-mail, then we will mail it to you as we have been in the past... not problem. *Earl Martin*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello, Chapter members. As I sit down to write this, I realized that today I DID NOT hold a shovel, snowrake, ice pick or snowblower controls in my hands! Hey, I even pulled out the bicycle and rode to the hardware store (come on Spring)!

I would like to thank Mr. **Bill Rewey** for speaking at the February meeting about his life, aviation adventures and military flying career and for sharing photos, etc., with us; always interesting. With that said, I'd like to remind members that if they want to share their aviation interest, skills, careers, and stories with us, please contact **Bud Rogers or Jack Jerred** and they'll schedule you in. And that invite goes out to anyone of aviation background.

After last month's attempt at getting the hangar open and then the furnace lit and going, I promise to get it warmer this month (Mother Nature?). Sorry, (new guy in training)!

I did just hear from Mr. **Mike Dean** of the "Poker Run" air group and the calendar is on the website: <http://web.mac.com/chapter60/poker/Home.html>. This site is great, complete with air mileage chart, map, rules and last year's winners - take a look! (I'll see if our website can have a link) Chapter 93 is event #10 of 14 events. This is a good excuse to attend a number of fly-ins (maybe even a few group Chapter 93 fly-outs or drive-outs could be arranged).

Other news I wish to share is that Mr. **Don Winkler** of Wisconsin Aviation has informed me of his (Wisconsin Aviation) plans to hold a "Hangar Dance" this August 9<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, at Wisconsin Aviation hangar. The music will be by "Ladies Must Swing", so mark your calendars. See you at the next meeting. *Don Ripp*

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EAA Chapter 93 publishes *Corben Courier* once a month for and about its members who are interested in all phases of aviation. Articles to be submitted must reach the editor by the first Saturday of the month. Meeting night is the third Thursday of the month unless otherwise stated. Members may advertise items free of charge. Business card size ads are \$5 per month or \$50 per year.

Disclaimer: The *Corben Courier* newsletter serves as a clearinghouse of ideas and suggestions for homebuilt aircraft and owner operated aircraft. No responsibility or liability is assumed, expressed, or implied for the suitability, accuracy, or approval of any information contained in this newsletter. Any parties using suggestions or ideas expressed herein do so at their own risk without recourse against anyone.