

Alexandria Times

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The Return of D-Day to Alexandria

On June 4, Alexandria commemorates D-Day for the 13th annual time. This year's commemoration features swing dancers, a 1940s Jazz Band, the U.S. Army Fife and Drum Corps, the Alexandria Citizens Band and a short formal ceremony with the mayor and city officials.

Alexandria's modern-day memorialization of June 6, 1944 events, is tied to its Sister City relationship with Caen, France, the capital of Normandy. Since 1991, Alexandria and Caen have exchanged cultural and educational delegations, including student exchanges, intern exchanges, lecture series and annual D-Day commemorative events.

Caen's history predates the invasion of Normandy, of course. Its limestone, Pierre de Caen, is world-renowned as a carving material. The limestone is featured in Westminster Cathedral. Caen's ties to England strengthened when its ruler William of Norman invaded England in 1066 and took the name William the Conqueror. In 1593, Henry IV converted to Catholicism in a ceremony at the Church of St. Pierre, ending the French religious wars.

More than 160,000 Allied troops invaded Normandy, France on June 6, 1944, giving them a significant foothold in continental Europe. The Battle for Caen spanned from June 6

to August 6, 1944. The battle destroyed 80% of Caen and the city took 18 years to rebuild.

Today, the capital of Normandy has an approximate population of 100,000 residents within the city limits and around another 50,000 in the surrounding areas. With a student body of 28,000, the Université de Caen Normandie plays a prominent role in Caen's culture.

This year's commemoration includes a lecture by historian Kim Bernard Holien, Ph.D., today, which is sold out. Holien's lecture, titled "Women Spies of D-Day," highlights the contribution of Allied women to Allied intelligence in piercing the At-

lantic Wall maintained by National Socialist forces. The Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum will host Holien's lecture.

The commemoration continues June 4 at Market Square from 1 to 4 p.m. The aforementioned swing dancers, jazz band, U.S. Army Fife and Drum Corps, the Alexandria Citizens Band, and World War II reenactors highlight the free program. The City of Alexandria invites you to commemorate this momentous event in our Sister City's history.

Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.