

Normandy Beach

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A radio broadcast from the beach of Normandy, France, on June 8, 1944, two days after the D-Day invasion. The reporter not only describes what he sees, but also the sounds, smells, and other sensations of the battlefield.

Audio

File:

Duration: 3:09

Transcript:

Audio Transcript

We're standing here; it's an absolutely incredible and fantastic sight. I don't know whether it's possible to describe it to you or not. It's late in the afternoon. The sun is going down. The sea is, uh, is choppy, and the beach is lined with men and materials and uh...guns, trucks, vehicles of all kinds on either side of us there are pillars of smoke, perhaps a mile, two miles away, which are rising from enemy shelling and further back we can see the smoke and results of our own shelling. Looking behind us we can see the big ships and the uh...some of the transports which have brought the troops in and overhead this incredible sight is still going on as more and more gliders are towed in by the C-47s, going over the sea wall, disappearing out of sight in apparently a wide sweep and dropping their...their...their men somewhere back there to uh, for a function which we don't know anything...all about. All we can do is stand here and marvel at the spectacle. Now...our men were trying to get the LCVF in closer to pick up the men who have been wading ashore in this cold sea and choppy winds, to pick up uh the...stuff. This place even smells like an invasion. It has a curious odor, which we always associate with modern war. It's the smell of oil and high explosives and burning things. Oh...thank you. Come on over here. Jafford who is one of the sailors has just come in with a handful of sand, because he heard me say awhile ago that what I wanted to do most of all was just to get ashore and reach down and take up a handful of sand and say, "This is France and I've got it in my hand, France at last after four years." Jafford, how does it feel to...just to reach down and grab a piece of sand and say, "I am grabbing French soil." Huh? "Well, it's a...since I was born in France, it has a special meaning to me." Were you born in France? "Yes." Where were you born? "In Calais." "You were? Well, that's not very far from here. Well, it has a special meaning for me, too, as you can imagine. Have you got some? We've gotta save this. We've gotta put it in a bottle or something. Now...uh...the uh...transport planes are going back, the C-47s who came in uh, towing the gliders. They are going back very close to the sea, and we're going back too. We've got our men aboard, all with handfuls of France in their hands and we're going to save it, because this has been a momentous occasion for all of us. There go our motors...uh...the ramp is going up. We're backing away from the beach now and soon we will be out in the salt spray and it'll be impossible for us to broadcast anymore.

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