

Former Attleboro official honors city soldier buried at Normandy

By George W. Rhodes ghrhodes@thesunchronicle.com May 24, 2020 Updated May 26, 2020



Attleboro resident Frank Cook visited Normandy on the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. Below, Cook is kneeling by the grave of Normand Gabriel Tardif, an Attleboro native who is the only city resident buried at Normandy. Tardif died during the invasion operation in 1944.

MARK STOCKWELL / the sun chronicle

Former Attleboro city council president Frank Cook's life is steeped in history.

He studies it, teaches it and family members have participated in two of the most monumental battles in America's history.

His great-grandfather Private John E. Cook was a cavalry soldier in the Union Army at Gettysburg in July of 1863, the battle that most historians consider the turning point of the Civil War.

We're here for you. The Sun Chronicle's local coronavirus pandemic coverage is available to all at thesunchronicle.com/news/coronavirus. Support our mission by subscribing. Visit thesunchronicle.com/subscribe or call 508-222-4091 today.

He served under Gen. John Buford whose unit was the first to encounter the Confederate Army under Gen. Robert E. Lee on July 1 as he pushed into Pennsylvania.

Buford engaged with some of Lee's forces and won the high ground, which gave the Union Army a big advantage in the ensuing fight.

The three-day battle stopped the Confederacy's invasion of the north and put the Union on course to create "a new birth of freedom," a phrase Lincoln used in his Gettysburg Address in November of that year during the dedication of a cemetery on the site.

The private later became an orderly for Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and was with him when Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April of 1865.

Meanwhile, Frank Cook's late dad Paul Cook, who retired as a deputy fire chief from the Boston Fire Department, was one of the thousands of Allied soldiers who invaded Normandy in June of 1944.

He wasn't in the first wave. He landed sometime later at bullet-blasted Utah Beach.

Cook was a sergeant in the Army and was part of a code-breaking unit known as the 3110th Signal Service Battalion.

The invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944 began the liberation of Europe, a new birth of freedom for the continent which had been under the Nazi yoke since 1940.

It was a pivotal battle in the war.

Thousands of allied soldiers were lost, but Cook survived.

He later served under Gen. George Patton and was part of the liberation of Paris and the Battle of Bulge, Hitler's last-gasp offensive which failed and signaled that it was just a matter of time before all of Europe would finally be free, at least the parts not occupied by the Soviet Union which was sweeping over Germany from the east.

The former city councilor and his wife Sandra attended ceremonies for the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 2013.

That's when he decided that he'd like to be in Normandy for the 75th anniversary of that world-altering fight in 2019.

And he and Sandra made the trip.

But before he left, Cook did some research.

He wanted to know if an Attleboro resident was among the 9,385 U.S. soldiers buried in the sprawling 172.5 acre Normandy American Cemetery.

And with the help of the Rev. Ron Gagne at LaSalette Shrine and city graves officer and Vietnam veteran Phil Audette, he discovered there was.

His name is Normand G. Tardif.

He was born and raised in Attleboro and was drafted into the U.S. Army.

At the time, he was employed at LaSalette Shrine.

See you in the Funnies. Share your thoughts about The Sun Chronicle's daily and weekend comics. Take the survey.

Tardif reported for duty in the Army on Aug. 22, 1943.

In less than a year he would be dead, one of the thousands of Allied soldiers who were killed in action as a massive wave of soldiers, tanks and planes pushed inland from the sandy and blood stained beaches at Normandy.

He went ashore at Omaha Beach in the second wave, Cook said.

The first wave was shredded by a fusillade of Nazi machine gun fire which was vividly portrayed in the 1998 movie "Saving Private Ryan."

The second wave faced the same.

But Tardif, 25, and a private in the 115th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Division, survived. However, he only had 57 days to live.

He was killed on Aug. 2, 1944.

Cook has been trying to find family members Tardif may still have in the area, but has been unsuccessful so far.

It's not known if anyone has visited the grave of that young soldier whose life was lost in nothing less than a war to free the world from murderous oppression.

Tardif may have been laying at peace in his silent grass-covered grave marked by a white cross for all of those 75 years with no one to notice as others meandered among row upon row of the dead looking for their own lost loved ones in the quiet, peaceful and cooling ocean breezes.

Whatever the case, Cook knew he would seek him out and if he and Sandra were the first or the 10th or the 100th, they would pay their respects to the young man from home who sacrificed so much for America and for Attleboro.

He gave his "last full measure of devotion" as Lincoln said of the Gettysburg dead.

It took Cook and his wife about five minutes to find him in Plot G, Row 21, Grave 27.

The moment tugged at their hearts.

"It was emotional to be there on that day, with all the events going on," Cook said. "It really kind of hit home."

It was a day of great ceremony and included speeches by President Donald Trump and President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Thousands of people were there.

But perhaps the most touching part of the ceremony was when two people from Attleboro planted an Attleboro flag and an American flag on Tardif's grave on that late spring day in the French landscape made hallow by the blood of a city soldier and soldiers from all over the U.S. and free world.

Tardif's sacrifice and the sacrifices of all who gave their lives so the rest of us can live in freedom must never be forgotten, but sometimes they are.

Cook said those losses sometimes disappear in the mists of history.

"Sometimes we forget about the sacrifices of the military, but I think about it a lot — what people went through to give us our liberties."

Lincoln's immortal Gettysburg Address applies to all battlefield cemeteries where lives were lost in the name of freedom.

"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced... (and) that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain..."



George W. Rhodes can be reached at 508-236-0432.

Facebook, Twitter, Email, Print, Bookmark

Tags Frank Cook, Sandra Cook, Normandy, Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln, Normand G. Tardif, The Sun Chronicle

GEORGE RHODES

Follow GEORGE RHODES

Recommended for you

Coronavirus: Cases fall as Attleboro schools get ready to open. Local News: Police seek public's help to identify suspects in North Attleboro jewelry theft linked to other heists. Local News: Warnings on scams, one of which targeted Foxboro Fire Department. Coronavirus: Stressors finances of horse owners and Norton rescue group.

Local News: One taken to hospital after early morning Wrentham house fire. Local News: Norfolk Advocates for Children earns re-accreditation by national organization. Local News: Attleboro firefighters given awards for bravery in house fire and car crash rescues. Local News: A Life: Thomas Cuddy Jr. remembered as pillar of Attleboro, and a 'great guy'.

Massachusetts Senior Drivers Should Claim This Large Reward (Check if You... ProvidenceInsurance | Sponsored. Massachusetts Launches New Policy for Cars Used Less Than 50 Miles per Day My Insurance Savings | Sponsored.

New Method Traces Ancient Back Thousands... Genetics Digest | Sponsored. Massachusetts Launches New Policy For Cars Use... ProvidenceInsurance | Sponsored. Search for Best Alaskan Cruises 2021! Cruises | Yahoo Search | Sponsored.

These Cars Are So Loaded It's Hard to Believe They're So Cheap Luxury SUVs | Search Ads | Sponsored. Drink This to Flush Your Liver Liver Detox Formula | Sponsored.

Clean Your Mac 1 in 2 Mac Users Don't Know This Way To Clean... MacKeeper | Sponsored. Drivers in Massachusetts, Steer Clear of This Mistake AutoInsurance.com | Sponsored. You May Not Want to Overlook Signs of Breast... Search Ads | Sponsored.

How Much Is My Car Worth? Find Out The Real Price! Car Value | Search Ads | Sponsored. Where Ron Howard Lives With His Wife Today Is Sad Storyline | Sponsored.

Welcome to the discussion. Log In

Can You Ace This Puppy Quiz? Warped Speed | Sponsored. The Real Cost of Dental Implants Will Surprise Yo... DailiKnow | Sponsored. The Dating Site for Highly-Educated Singles in Nort... EliteSingles | Sponsored.

This Secret IRS Loophole May Change Your Life go.dailystocktraders.com | Sponsored. A StairLift Elevator Could Be Just What The Doctor Ordered (Prices Might Be... Stairlifts | Search Ads | Sponsored.

Search For Luxury Senior Living Homes Near You! Senior Living | Yahoo Search | Sponsored. You Might be Entitled to Recieve New Hearing Ai... Hearing Aids | Search Ads | Sponsored. 7 Discounts Seniors Only Get If They Ask National Penny For Seniors | Sponsored.

NEW Anti-Fog ANTI-REFLECTIVE COATING ACTIVATOR CLOTH ZENNI

Sections

- News
- Obituaries
- Sports
- Opinion
- Features
- e-Edition

Services

- Contact Us
- Subscribe
- Manage Your Subscription
- Place an Ad or Announcement
- Submit Your News
- Photo Reprints
- Print Services

www.thesunchronicle.com 34 South Main Street Attleboro, MA 02703 Phone: 508-222-7000

Follow Us