



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael F. Nozzolio

## 70th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY A TIME TO MEMORIALIZE HEROES WHO FOUGHT

MICHAEL F. NOZZOLIO June 5, 2014

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**

On June 6, 1944, the United States and our allies charged the beaches of France in the largest air, land, sea and military operation the world has ever known. The landing included over 5,000 ships, 11,000 airplanes, and over 150,000 service men. When it was over, more than 4,000 of the Allied Forces were dead. This tremendous show of courage and sacrifice represents one of the most defining moments in our Nation's history. As mankind faced one of its darkest hours, the men who fought on D-Day turned the tide of World War II and helped preserve liberty for future generations across the globe.

Tony DeTomaso of Auburn was one of those men. As a member of the 299th Combat Engineer Battalion, many of whom were also from Auburn and Central New York, he was among the first wave of troops that landed on the beaches of Normandy during the invasion. Tony was only 19 when he and his fellow soldiers fought to clear the beaches so that Allied troops could set up their command posts. During the battle, six members of the 299th made the ultimate sacrifice and died fighting to liberate the world from tyranny and oppression.

When I first met Tony several years ago, we discussed the tremendous sacrifices that were made by the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion during World War II. His devotion to his fellow veterans was inspiring, and I pledged that I would do all possible to help him ensure that these brave men receive the recognition they deserve so that future generations will know of their sacrifices. Tony's commitment was always on my mind as I fought to establish the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery, which was dedicated July 2011 as a world-class monument to our Nation's veterans for their courage, commitment and service.

Tony was a member of the greatest generation of Americans, and while he sadly passed away in early 2011 at the age of 86, his legacy lives on as we once again commemorate D-Day and reflect on the sacrifices our veterans have made to preserve our freedoms and secure a safer, more peaceful world.

Another member of that historic generation is Joseph Mack, who was recently selected by the Greatest Generations Foundation to return to Normandy for the 70th Anniversary of D-Day. Joe is traveling to Normandy free of charge to be honored with the French Legion of Honor Medal for his service during World War II. This trip is a well deserved honor and I was very pleased to learn Joe was given the opportunity to

make this incredible journey back to where he and his fellow soldiers alter the course of history so many years ago.

The Greatest Generations Foundation is a non-profit International organization dedicated to promoting recognition and respect for war veterans of past and current conflicts. They work to ensure that the honor and sacrifice of these veterans is never forgotten, nor that the value of their deeds be allowed to disappear into the annals of history. Since 2004, they have offered the opportunity for World War II veterans to return to their battlefields at no cost to them. If you are interested in learning more about the Greatest Generations Foundation, visit <http://www.tggf.org/>

Both Tony and Joe were members of the greatest generation of Americans, soldiers who left their homes and loved ones to go overseas to fight and shed their blood in defense of world freedom. Just as they recognized their duty to honor and serve their Nation, we too must recognize our duty as Americans to honor the profound sacrifices all our veterans made so that we could live our lives in freedom.

There is no greater debt of honor we owe than that which we owe to our veterans. To the servicemen who risked their lives, and those who paid the ultimate price, please know we will never forget.