

# D-Day Conneaut



**Thursday, Aug. 15**  
**Friday, Aug. 16**  
**Saturday, Aug 17**

**2019**



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# Organization plans to bring something unique to D-Day

**BY MARK TODD**  
For the Star Beacon

CONNEAUT— A Florida-based organization dedicated to the mechanized warfare of World War II plans to bring something unique to D-Day Conneaut this year.

WW2 Armor, headquartered in Deltona, Florida, near Orlando, will be making its fourth appearance at the big re-enactment on the shores of Lake Erie. The group is dedicated to the role tanks and other armored vehicles played in the war.

As in years past, WW2 Armor will bring an assortment of tanks and support vehicles, but will also use the occasion to show off its latest acquisition: a 155mm M1 gun, known as "Long Tom." The group recently took possession of the formidable weapon, and plan to fire off some



PHOTO COURTESY WW2 ARMOR

**A 155mm M1 "Long Tom," a recent acquisition by Florida-based WW2 Armor, will rattle the earth at D-Day Conneaut this month. The organization, devoted to educating the public about tank warfare, will make its fourth trip to the re-enactment.**

(blank) rounds during the weekend.

The crowd should be impressed, said John Thomas, director of facilities/event coordinator for WW2 Armor.

"It's an incredible piece of artillery," he said during a recent phone interview. "The show it will put on will be massive."

Long Tom joins a number of other pieces

— including tanks, a half-track and a motorized howitzer — that are coming to Conneaut. Also making the trip is a vintage ambulance, Thomas said.

In honor of the 75th anniversary of D-Day, WW2 Armor is bringing machines that would have been used in the Normandy Invasion, Thomas said.

"We want items that

would have been seen on the beach on D-Day," he said.

The vehicles are part of a collection assembled by Rabbi Rob Thomas, said John Thomas (no relation). Rabbi Thomas began putting together his inventory just a few years ago, Thomas said.

"He has been very,

SEE **PLANS**, PAGE 11

## Allied vehicle inspector is unofficial mechanic-traffic cop for D-Day Conneaut

**BY MARK TODD**  
For the Star Beacon

CONNEAUT — Don Pitchers is the unofficial mechanic/traffic cop for D-Day Conneaut.

As Allied vehicle inspector for the re-enactment, Pitchers makes sure the military-style trucks, jeeps and motorcycles that rumble through Township Park are in good working order, properly licensed and driven safely.

Pitchers, of Rockford, Illinois, wears many hats for the event. He confirms vehicles are properly insured and registered to participate. He reviews rules of conduct with the vehicle owner/operator, discusses the park's entrance and exit points and gives each vehicle a 10-minute safety inspection.

Pitchers, who has restored vehicles since he was 13 years old, can also make repairs when possible.

"I am very knowledgeable on vehicles," he said. "I carry tools and help where I can."

Mechanical problems on site are rare, however. Vehicles usually arrive at the park in tip-top shape.

"Everybody is very good about doing main-



Pitchers

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## CONNEAUT AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

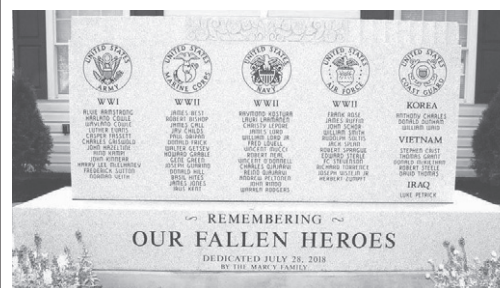
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WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Re-enactors of American World War II servicemen storm the beach on Saturday afternoon at D-Day Conneaut 2018 at Conneaut Township Park.

# Township Park serves as stand-in for Normandy coast

BY MARK TODD

For the Star Beacon

CONNEAUT — For two decades, Township Park has served as a stand-in for the Normandy coast for a host of World War II re-enactments.

Since 1999, living historians have attacked the park's grassy bluff in pursuit of "enemy"

determined not to give ground.

At the beginning, the event was small, attracting slightly more than 100 re-enactors and a few dozen spectators. Today, the re-enactment — dubbed D-Day Conneaut — has become the largest WWII tribute event in the country, bringing thousands to town for

one weekend in August.

"It's been a journey," said park commissioner Gary Coxon.

Township Park is managed by three commissioners, but Coxon is the only one on hand for the first re-enactment.

"It was so small at the time," he said. "It came and went so fast."

Township Park's

topography is the reason it hosts D-Day Conneaut. The park's towering bluffs and wide, sandy beach closely resembled the real thing.

A German television crew creating a program on the famed invasion in the late 1990s felt the park was a suitable stand-in. Re-enactors who participated in the filming remembered the park when they began planning an encampment dedicated to the events of June 6, 1944.

Coxon recalled organizers seeking permission to stage an event were initially rebuffed by park officials.

"The first time we didn't know what the term 're-enactor' meant," he said. "At first we ignored them. We didn't think (an encampment) was in the park's best interests."

The group persisted, however, and Coxon came to see the advantages. Their numbers were so slight that inconvenience would be minimal, he said.

"It was a really small group," he said. "It was more like a club."

Coxon eventually persuaded other commissioners to give their blessing — and the rest is (WWII) history.

D-Day Conneaut gained traction under the auspices of D-Day Ohio Inc., which stages the spectacle. The organization's board of directors, aided by a team of volunteers, transformed the event from an affair spanning just a few hours to a program that spans 2 ½ days.

The original September date was dropped in favor of the third weekend in August, a time when most kids are still out of school and people can fit the event into their vacation calendars.

Upwards of 30,000 people attended last year's D-Day Conneaut and more are anticipated this month for the special anniversary edition.

The park has seen some physical changes resulting from the event, including a permanent public address system and a small gravel parking lot near the grove where German re-enactors pitch

their tents.

D-Day Ohio reimburses the park for expenses it incurs over the weekend, so the event is not a big budget-buster, Coxon said. "Taxpayers aren't subsidizing it," he said.

Park officials and D-Day Conneaut staffers have a good relationship, Coxon said. "Things have really worked out well for them and us," he said.

In the fall, voters will be asked to approve a Township Park levy that could bring a new concession stand/restroom/changing area to the beach. If the levy succeeds and the work goes forward, construction should not interfere with any future D-Day events, Coxon said.

The growth of the re-enactment over 20 years has been amazing, Coxon said. What began as a compact event has turned into an attraction that pumps plenty of money into the local economy.

"We're a part of the community, and it's something good for the community," he said.

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Sunday: 8:00am - 5:00pm

# Two movies to be screened at this year's event

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

bhaytcher@starbeacon.com

CONNEAUT — The Conneaut Public Library has expanded on their usual movie night at D-Day, and will air a second movie, this one, on Friday night.

"Traditionally, the library has gotten a license to show a movie," Conneaut Library Executive Director Kathy Zappitello said.

This year, the library will be showing "The Longest Day," starring John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, and Henry Fonda. The movie shows the events of D-Day, from both the Allied

and German sides.

"The Longest Day" won two Academy Awards, and was nominated for three more.

The movie will start at dusk, around 9 p.m., on Thursday. "When it's dark enough to show the film, the film will begin," Zappitello said. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own chairs and blankets, Zappitello said. The movie does have a three hour run-time, Zappitello said.

The movie will be raffled off before the event.

A second movie night will be held at the same place, on Friday night at dusk, with a special twist.

## THE LONGEST DAY

Starring John Wayne, Robert Mitchum, and Henry Fonda.

At dusk on Thursday

## D-DAY IN 14 STORIES

Stories of soldiers and civilians who survived D-Day

At dusk on Friday

"D-Day in 14 Stories" tells the stories of soldiers and civilians who survived D-Day. The movie, filmed in Canada, includes reenactments and interviews with armed forces veterans from both sides, along with French Resistance members who were present in Normandy at the time.

The documentary features D-Day Conneaut's

own Higgins boat and its crew, Zappitello said.

"We have a corps of D-Day volunteers that drive Higgins boats, and they were asked to be part of a Canadian production," Zappitello said. "We thought, 'oh, let's see if we can get the rights to show that, and add that onto our D-Day event this year,'" she added.

Friday's show will be the first time "D-Day in 14 Stories" has been shown in the United States, Zappitello said. The show will be streamed, which presented some challenges.

"We needed to be on a dedicated line, so that we don't drop the connection," Zappitello said.

"Sometimes we're very autonomous in the way we think about history, and how it's been presented to us and what we've retained from it. And everybody's like that right, you have a very narrow perspective sometimes on world events? And

the storming of the beaches of Normandy is certainly a world-wide event," Zappitello said.

"It really simplified the invasion, the timeline, and the players in a way that the average person, like myself, can understand and have a through knowledge of D-Day, and it's certainly appropriate for all ages," Zappitello said. "This is something that I think would benefit a parent wanting to teach a child of what this event was," she added.

"D-Day in 14 Stories" premiered on Canadian television on June 1, 2019, and was made by Yap Films.





# Conneaut couple tour Normandy coast during trip to France

**BY MARK TODD**

For the Star Beacon

CONNEAUT — A Conneaut couple who live near the beach so important to the annual D-Day Conneaut re-enactment recently spent time visiting the real thing.

Brenda and Tim Rowbotham included a tour of the Normandy coast in a two-week trip to France in June. They missed the 75th anniversary activities by a few days, but saw enough to come home very impressed.

Six days of their trip were spent visiting some of the key sites of the Normandy Invasion, including Omaha and Utah beaches and villages that figured prominently in the fighting.

The importance of those days is not lost on the French, who have erected many markers across the region. Beaches are dotted with museums.

"Everything is so well documented," Brenda said.

Tim agreed. "There are all kinds of monuments," he said. "There's a lot of history up there."

The Rowbothams traveled with a group of 22 people, including a World War II veteran, who was treated like a celebrity by the locals.

"People were swarming around him," Brenda said.

Similarly, there was a



PHOTO COURTESY BRENDA ROWBOTHAM

**Brenda and Tim Rowbotham recently visited Omaha Beach and other sites of the Normandy Invasion of June 6, 1944.**

big sense of gratitude from the residents. Flags of the countries that participated in the Invasion were spotted "all over Normandy," Brenda said.

"They appreciated what had happened," she said.

The tour also included plenty of German fortifications and bunkers, which are open for inspection. The group wasn't alone - plenty of tourists were visiting the sites, too, the couple said.

The Rowbothams stayed in a manor house for part of their visit, which provided easy access to the important sites.

The couple said they had no idea the Normandy region was so big.

The five beaches involved in the invasion — Omaha, Utah, Sword, Gold and Juno— actually span a 50-mile



OMAHA BEACH PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENDA ROWBOTHAM & CONNEAUT TOWNSHIP PARK PHOTO BY MARK TODD | FOR THE STAR BEACON

**Omaha Beach in Normandy, France (left), and its stand-in at Conneaut Township Park (right). Brenda and Tim Rowbotham of Conneaut, who recently visited the scene of the famed invasion, said they were struck by the strong resemblance.**

stretch of shoreline, Brenda said.

The Rowbothams were also struck at how closely the landing sites resembled Conneaut's Township Park, home to the popular re-enactment.

The park's bluffs truly evoke the cliffs Allied invaders encountered, while a stone bridge inside the park is a fitting substitute for the La Fiere Bridge, scene of a battle that will be re-created over the weekend at the park.

You can see why they picked (the park)," Tim said.

WWII re-enactors who come to Conneaut for the annual event suggested the trip to France, they said. The couple agreed, but it wasn't a snap decision.

"They got us interested, but we had to think it over for several years," Tim said, smiling.

The couple had their personal favorite moments. Tim, who served with a Ranger unit

in the Vietnam War, said he enjoyed seeing Pointe Du Hoc, a series of 100-foot cliffs U.S. Rangers successfully scaled to reach German defenders.

Brenda said she had

two special memories: Omaha Beach, scene of so many American casualties, and the military cemeteries that overlook the English Channel, especially the Normandy American

Cemetery and Memorial.


"The minute you walk on Omaha Beach, you get so emotional," she said. "The cemeteries, too. It was overwhelming."

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# Veterans will be VIPs of this year's anniversary edition

BY MARK TODD

For the Star Beacon

CONNEAUT — Military veterans will be the VIPs of this year's anniversary edition of D-Day Conneaut.

Dozens of men and women who saw service in World War II and Korea have registered to attend the re-enactment, which this year will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion.

As of late July, more than 100 WWII vets and 97 Korean War veterans had signed up, "which is great," said Eric Montgomery, World War II veterans liaison for the event. D-Day Conneaut

## CLAUDE J. KOON

**Residence:** Salem OH

**Service:** Entered active service with the U.S. Army Sept. 9 1943, honorably discharged from on Jan. 10 1946, with the rank of T4 Technical Sergeant

**Military awards:** Army Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Badge, European African Middle East Campaign Medal (campaign stars for Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe); World War II Victory Medal; Rifle

Sharpshooter Badge

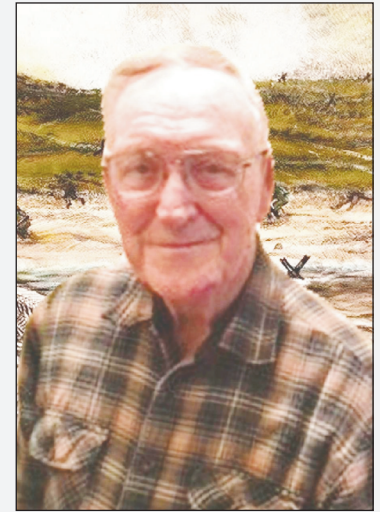
**Claude's story:** A rigger and radio operator with the 299th Engineer Battalion, he arrived on Omaha Beach 14 days after D-Day.

The battalion was charged with a number of duties, including the building and maintenance of roads, constructing water distribution points, removing roadside mines and wrecked German vehicles and operating stone quarries.

**His own words:** "The clearing of mines was probably the most

hazardous duty but there was always the threat of enemy artillery fire, attacks from enemy planes, and — as the war was winding down — from V-1 Buzz Bombs. Several of those bombs hit close by but luckily I was never hit. I survived five battle campaigns from Normandy across France, Belgium, Luxembourg and then into Germany. I do not consider myself a hero, just did what I was told to do".

**After the war:** He is retired from the United States Postal Service.



began welcoming Korean War vets a few years ago, he said.

If numbers hold,

this year's turnout will handily exceed the 2018 total, which saw 105 WWII vets and 89

Korean service members travel to the city's Lake Erie shore.

Invitations were sent

in mid-May, Montgomery said. He wasn't sure if the anniversary generated more inter-

est among those who served.

SEE **VIPs**, PAGE 10

# Thank You All Who Have Served and are Serving!

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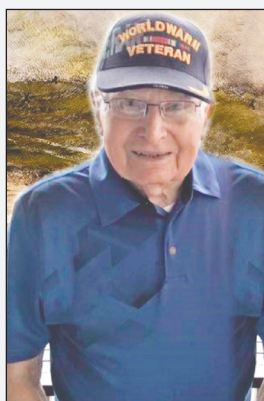


# ALBERT J. KOSIBA

**Residence:** Warren

**Service:** Entered active service U.S. Army on Aug. 6, 1942; honorably discharged Dec. 16, 1945, with the rank of T4 Technical Sergeant

**Military awards:** Army Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (campaign stars for Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland and Ground Combat); World War II Victory Medal



**Albert's story:** *Serving with the 740th Anti-Aircraft Battalion as chief radar operator, he landed on Omaha Beach via landing craft in early July.*

*The group was assigned to provide airspace cover for forces advancing through France, Belgium and Holland.*

**His own words:** *"In support of the allied march across France, danger was ever present from enemy fighters and bombers, but as for being heroes, we just did our job and liberated Europe from the Nazis."*

**After the war:** He is retired as a tool engineer for the Packard Electric Division of General Motor.

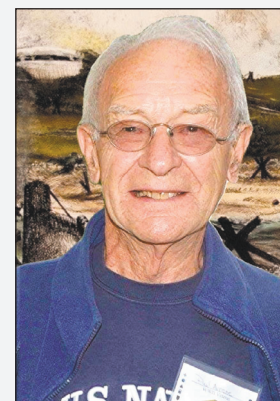
# PAUL ARNONE

**Residence:**

Jamestown, New York  
**Service:** Entered active service with the U.S. Navy on Feb. 4, 1943 and was honorably discharged on Nov. 26, 1945, with the rank of Signalman First Class

**Military awards:** American Campaign Medal, European African Middle East Campaign (campaign star for Normandy); Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Combat Action Medal

**Paul's story:** *Served*



*aboard LST 44 on June 6, 1944, at Gold Beach in Normandy, in support of British troops. LST 44 landed 27 times in France, supplying troops with food and medical*

*supplies, returning the wounded to England and delivering reinforcements while successfully avoiding German mines placed along the shore and in harbors. The crew later was transferred to the war in the Pacific.*

**In his words:** *"I was honored to be a part of this historic mission, doing my part in liberating the oppressed people of France."*

**After the war:** Paul worked in retail as a store owner and management team member prior to retirement.

# DANIEL BUZEK

**Residence:** New Franklin OH

**Service:** Entered active service with the U.S. Navy on Oct. 29 1943 and was honorably discharged May 21 1945, with the rank of Machinist Mate Third Class

**Military awards:** American Campaign Medal; European African Middle East Campaign (campaign star for the invasion of southern France); Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal

**Daniel's story:** *Served aboard LST 994 (Landing Ship/Tank) and in Au-*



*gust 1944 participated in Operation Dragoon near St. Raphael. Later, his vessel transported men, equipment, supplies and prisoners of war between Italy, France, Corsica, Tunisia and Algeria. At the end of 1944 he was transferred to a subma-*

*rine tender, the USS Aegir.*

*In his words: "LST 994 made multiple trips to the landing beaches in what has been called the most combative area along the southern coast of France during Operation Dragoon. During the battle, while manning my battle station, a 20mm machine gun, an enemy plane was spotted. A fellow crewman and I took aim and fired at the plane and it veered away from our ship with no damage to our ship or harm to the crew."*

**After the war:** He is retired from the Good-year Rubber Corporation.

# RICHARD WILCZEWSKI

**Residence:** Erie, PA

**Service:** Entered active service with the U.S. Navy on March 29, 1943 and was honorably discharged May 10 1946 with the rank of Ships Cooks First Class

**Military awards:** Navy Good Conduct Medal; American Campaign Medal; European African Middle East Campaign Medal (one campaign star for Normandy); World War II Victory Medal

**Richard's story:** *He was atop a landing craft, manning a 20mm Bofors gun, at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. The ship carried 101 casualties*



*back to England. On 51 subsequent trips across the English Channel, LST 497 ferried food, medicine, fuel, vehicles and troops to Normandy Invasion beaches and nearby harbors and ports in a handful of countries. Mines and sunken*

*vessels posed a constant threat to the ship and crew.*

**In his words:** *"Destroyers were zipping everywhere, accurately shelling any enemy target they were called upon to knock out. On the beach, mines and shells made one helluva racket but the mines were mostly set off by our forces who destroyed them before vice-versa. And it was the Navy which landed the almighty doughboy and gave him a pat on the rump to start him toward Paris."*

**After the war:** Richard retired as a real estate and appraising agent.

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**CONNEAUT PUBLIC LIBRARY**

# VIPs: Veterans will receive a hero's welcome at D-Day Conneaut

FROM PAGE 8

"It may be on people's minds," he said.

Many of this year's attendees have made the trip before, Montgomery said. "A good portion of them are coming back," he said.

Veterans receive a hero's welcome at the event, escorted to a special hospitality tent erected near the Allied re-enactors' camp on the east bluffs of Township Park. They have the opportunity to discuss their military careers and answer questions from the public at the tent on Friday, Aug. 16 at 1:30 p.m. and Saturday, Aug. 17 at 12:45 p.m.

A special program, "A Veteran's Legacy," will be held at 10:30 a.m. Aug. 16 at the hospitality tent. Harry Miller, who lives in the Washington D.C., area, will talk about his unique military history, serving in WWII, Korea and Vietnam, Montgomery said.

All veterans who attend receive gift bags that include a calendar, photos, notebooks, military-themed items and a veteran's pin, Montgomery said. The bags are hand-stenciled with the recipient's branch of service, he said.

Another highlight of the weekend is the annual Legion of Honor

ceremony 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 17, at the stage in the Allied camp, where representatives from the French government formally thank a handful of WWII personnel. This year, six men will be recognized, one of them posthumously, Montgomery said.

The award winners are Albert Kosiba, of Warren; Claude Koon, of Salem; Daniel Buzek, of New Franklin; Paul Arnone, of Jamestown, New York; Richard Wilczewski, of Erie, Pennsylvania and the late William Cook Jr., of Parker, Pennsylvania. Cook died last year, Montgomery said.

Cook's son-in-law will accept his medal, Montgomery said. The rest of the honorees are expected to attend, he said.

The U.S. Navy is well represented among the recipients — four of the six served in that branch during the war. Three of those sailors saw duty aboard special vessels — LSTs (Landing Ship/Tank) — that carried cargo, munitions and troops between England and mainland Europe.

Government officials from Ohio and Pennsylvania will also be on the stage, Montgomery said.

A re-enactor since 2003, Montgomery also serves on the board of D-Day Ohio, Inc., which conducts the event. For Montgomery, D-Day is

## LEGION OF HONOR HONOREE

**WILLIAM H. COOK JR.**  
(deceased August 2018)

**Residence:** Late of Parker, Pennsylvania

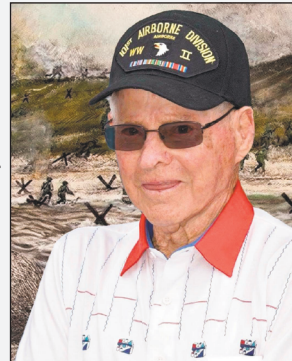
**Service:** Entered active service with the U.S. Army on March 10, 1943, and was honorably discharged Nov. 1, 1945, with the rank of Private First Class

**Military awards:** Army Good Conduct Medal; Distinguished Unit Badge; European Theater Service Medal (campaign stars for Normandy, Northern France, Southern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, Central Europe and Air Offensive Europe); Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster; Parachutists Badge; Carbine Marksman and World War II Victory Medal

**William's story:** *A machine-gunner with the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, he was dropped into Normandy early on the morning of June 6, 1944. The unit was engaged in small arms fire with the enemy throughout the day. The following day, some naval artillery shells called in support fell short, injuring Cook and others. He was evacuated back to England to recover. He would be wounded again in October 1944, but would rejoin his unit.*

**After the war:** William retired as a foreman at General Motors Corporation and also owned a general store.

**In memorium:** *Son-in-law James Weeter will accept William's medal.*



personal: his great-uncle was killed on June 6, 1944, while serving with the 6th Naval Beach Battalion.

The Tennessee resident said he is proud to serve the veterans who make the trek to Conneaut each year, adding

he is grateful to the city for its hospitality. The positive response from the community makes the event possible, Montgomery said.

"Without the folks in Conneaut embracing it, we couldn't hold it," he said.

# World of Tanks developer returning to D-Day

**BY BRIAN HAYTCHER**  
bhaytcher@starbeacon.com

CONNEAUT — The developer of historical action game World of Tanks will be at D-Day Conneaut with 15 game stations running their game.

World of Tanks is an online game based around tank combat, with tanks from the 1920s to 1970s.

The developers will bring 15 computers. The developers are teaming up with Alienware and Cool Master for the computers and peripherals.

"We're thrilled to be coming back for the 75th Anniversary of Operation Overlord," Zachary Doig, Senior Manager of community and events at World of Tanks said.

"Sponsoring a massive living history event like D-Day Conneaut is the perfect opportunity for us on the World of Tanks team to further that goal and reach people who share that respect," Doig said.

Wargaming.net, the

developer of World of Tanks, is a sponsor of D-Day Conneaut.

"At Wargaming, we make video games that feature historical military vehicles — so we do our best to respect and give back to the historical legacy of those vehicles and the men who crewed them," Doig said.

They will be holding several raffles for computer accessories throughout the event, Doig said. "(We) will have various opportunities for attendees to win Alienware Laptops, Cooler Master Keyboards and Mice, and some cool opportunities to do more at the event," he said.

"They bring a lot of things to the program that we don't normally have," Jim Snyder, vendor coordinator at D-Day Conneaut, said. "They got all kinds of new stuff they're doing. They've got virtual reality games ... where you play them on an iPad, and you're right on the beach, so it's a big deal."

# PLANS: WW2 Armor to bring newest acquisition: 'Long Tom'

FROM PAGE 3

very aggressive" in finding authentic vehicles, Thomas said.

Rabbi Thomas is a military veteran — he served in the Middle East — with a keen interest in World War II, especially armor of that era.

Thomas has strong credibility among dealers in military hardware, John Thomas

said. "They reach out to him daily," he said.

To date, the collection includes several U.S. and German tanks, some active and some undergoing restoration, as well as authentic support vehicles. Some modern-era supply vehicles are also in the fleet, too. All are housed in "several large warehouses" outside Orlando, Thomas said.

Vehicles undergo a thorough restoration process, Thomas said. No cost is spared to create a vehicle that is authentic and safe for the crew and public, he said. All tanks, for example are fitted with a contemporary fire suppression system, Thomas said. Cannon and smaller arms are adapted to fire blanks, he said.

All vehicles are

licensed "under the watchful eye" of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Thomas said.

"He will not take a penny," he said. "He carries the whole load. He considers it his honor to provide an opportunity to see the equipment and (commemorate) our great victory (in World War II).

WW2 Armor is

comprised of full-time staff and a group of volunteers who undergo rigorous training on safety protocol, Thomas said. Driving such massive vehicles, as well as operating the live guns, can be very risky, he said.

Personnel undergo "very regimented" training at regular intervals. "The business of what we do is extremely dangerous,"

Thomas said.

Some 30 team members will make the trip to D-Day Conneaut, Thomas said. "They will give talks — and put on an incredible show," he said.

WW2 Armor's main mission is to share the story of tank warfare, battle tactics and what it meant to serve inside a tank, according to the organization's website.

# COP: Pitchers is Allied vehicle inspector for the re-enactment

FROM PAGE 3

tenance ahead of time," he said.

This year, Pitchers and his team (another person examines Axis vehicles) expect to be busier than ever. As of late July, 196 vehicles had been registered for the re-enactment, more than last year, he said.

He concentrates on vehicles that move among pedestrians inside the park, not the tanks and other big machines usually parked away from the busy public areas.

Safety is the watchword, Pitchers said. No vehicle enters the park until it is examined.

Once approved, it is given a window decal that lets staff know it is authorized to be on the grounds, he said.

Pitchers is also authorized to shut down all traffic inside the park if necessary. "If there is rain, we will stop all

vehicles (to prevent damage to the park turf)," he said.

This year, driving inside the park may be more restricted than usual. Organizers expect more visitors than usual due to the D-Day anniversary, and more people means less wiggle room for vehicles.

Pitchers also keeps an eye out for vehicles that are obviously reproductions and too far off the mark, history-wise. D-Day Conneaut strives for vehicles that are as authentic as possible, he said.

"We want people to

feel they are stepping back into World War II," Pitchers said.

He knows something about vintage vehicles, having restored a 1942 Dodge half-ton command car used for radio work. Some 150 of the vehicles were built and only 12 remain, Pitchers said.

Pitchers became a member of the D-Day Conneaut organizational staff in 2014. In that time, Pitchers said he feels he has gained the trust of re-enactors who understand his role.

"I'm there to observe," he said. "If there's a

problem, people know me and respect me."

The vast majority of owners understand

Pitchers' job and comply with the rules, he said. Owners are proud of their vehicles and

want to show them off, he said. "My job is to make sure they do it safely," Pitchers said.

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