

30 Years Ago Thursday

Vestal Man Recalls D-Day

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More than 2.8 million men were in the Allied force: 20 U.S. divisions, 14 British, three Canadian, one French and one Polish.

The Germans had more than 60 divisions and reserves. There is no way of knowing how many area men took part in the invasion. There's no question that many did — many living through it, many not. What follows is the experience of one man.

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By STEVE HAMBALEK

The Allied invasion of France during World War II was the largest and one of the most significant military exploits in history. One of the participants and witnesses was Henry O. Rathje of Vestal.

On D-Day, June 4, 1944, Rathje was a seaman first class aboard the Coast Guard Landing Ship, Tanks (LST) 262, which was a part of the invading force, first at Utah Beach, then at Omaha Beach, where U.S. troops landed.

Rathje, 48, of 504 Mirador Drive, now an installer of telephone dial equipment for Western Electric, said he has vivid memories of D-Day.

"The first 24 hours were the most hectic. Nothing worked. We were supposed to be in the third wave, but the first and second waves had failed.

"The casualties were tremendous. We were unable to beach the ship. The number of people I saw drown you wouldn't believe. One LST hit a mine and sank immediately." There were no survivors, he said.

One of his memories of Utah Beach is seeing seemingly boundless fields of poppies behind the German pillboxes.

The LSTs were only 310 feet long. They carried armament and other equipment from England to France. On the return trip, they brought back the wounded, and later German prisoners of war.

Rathje said the top men in charge on D-Day had to improvise constantly because everything didn't go as planned and several unexpected problems arose.



—Press Photo by Paul F. Konecny

SHIRT OFF HIS BACK — Henry O. Rathje, a veteran of the Allied invasion of France June 4, 1944, shows the shirt he wore during his service in the U.S. Coast Guard at the time.

At one of the beaches, the landing craft carrying troops and equipment hit a sand bar instead of the mainland and many of the soldiers, loaded down with equipment, jumped into the water and drowned.

Someone had to make the decision to sink 15 Liberty ships to form a breakwater for the landing craft, he said.

About 3,000 U.S. combat men died in the first few hours of the fighting at Omaha Beach alone.

Rathje said his LST made 66 crossings from England to France between D-Day and Victory-in-Europe (VE) Day, May 8, 1945. Each crossing took about 12 hours, he said.

One of Rathje's duties was

Day, His Role at Normandy



—Official U.S. Coast Guard Photo

SOON AFTER D-DAY — On June 8, 1944, this was the scene at Utah Beach in France, where U.S. troops invaded France two days before during World War II. Balloons were used to ward off low flying enemy strafers. Rathje's ship is second one from right.

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One of the ironies of Rathje's life is that he could have possibly served in the German armed forces instead of the U.S. Coast Guard. His

parents were natives of Die Insel Forh, North Friesland, now in West Germany.

They emigrated to the U.S., and opened a delicatessen in Brooklyn, where Henry and two other children were born. When the business collapsed during the depression of the 1930s, the mother took the children back to her home in

Die Insel Fohr, the father remaining in Brooklyn.

Henry attended school, speaking not German but Friesich. One day the children were informed that henceforth they would be taught and would speak only High German. The order had come from Adolph Hitler.

Rathje said one of his

grandfathers looked at him and issued the order, "Get that kid back to the U.S." and he returned, at the age of 11. In 1943, when he was 17, he enlisted in the Coast Guard.

About a year later he found himself aboard the 262, bobbing in the flotilla that had a date with history on the coast of France.

Vestal Man Recalls D-Day, His Role at Normandy

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Schecter In Race, Raps Local GOP 'Watergate Mentality'

By JUDY TOLL

William Schecter, a public relations consultant from Ulster County, flew into Broome County airport yesterday afternoon to declare his candidacy for the Democratic nomination to the House of Representatives from the 27th District, and came down hard on local Republican party leaders.

Schecter referred to Assemblywoman Constance E. Cook (R-Ithaca) withdrawing from the 27th District race on Friday, saying he was "quite distressed to read that."

"I was secretly rooting for her," he said.

"In terms of the political process, what the (Republican) leaders in the eastern part of this district have done is to practice the Watergate mentality," Schecter said.

By choosing a candidate, he said, the Republican leaders have prevented an open primary.

Schecter was referring to the endorsement of Broome County executive Edwin L. Crawford by the Delaware, Ulster and Sullivan county Re-



WILLIAM SCHECTER
public chairman.

Mrs. Cook said on Friday that she believed her candidacy was "a threat to Republican leaders in the eastern part of the district," who were going to unite to back Crawford.

Triple Endorsement of Crawford, Page 1B

"I don't know why they've done it," Schecter said, "but the pressures were significant enough for her to get out." Schecter, who is a former aide to State Comptroller Ar-

thur Levitt and the late U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy, joins announced Democratic candidates Robert M. Kropp, Town of Union supervisor, Ithaca attorney Matthew McHugh and Michael P. Sloan, a New York City foundation executive, who maintains a Binghamton residence.

Economics will be the main issue of his campaign, Schecter said, including ways to offset inflation and recession. Schecter called them "bread and butter" issues — how the average family man can put food on the table, gasoline in the car, and how he can find a job.

Although he said he is building "very strong support" in organized labor, Schecter said he is risking that support to some degree by taking a stand in favor of economic controls.

"They're organized labor not pleased with it," Schecter said, "but I'll maintain my stand. Nixon's freeze on wages and prices was not equitable, and labor is understandably squashed about going for more controls." But controls have kept in-

flation at around 3 per cent," he added. "The solution is to get a group to organize a control program that would be equitable to all."

Schecter also said he favors a tax-relief program that would offset cost of higher education and other programs that would put what he called the country's lopsided perspectives in order.

"Take a look at where the money is going," he said. "We have a society today of socialism for the rich and free enterprise for the poor."

Schecter referred to government subsidy of the financially-troubled Lockheed Corp. and said, "That's an example of classic textbook Marxism."

Schecter said the country's priorities should be rearranged so that small businesses might receive aid from the federal government, so that social security benefits could be insured even if the

recipient's income rises above the current \$2,400 ceiling, and so less money would be spent on nuclear weapons and more spent on food programs.

Schecter said he plans to spend about \$12,000 in a television campaign to make him self better known in Broome County. He said he is just beginning to raise funds for his campaign, but that he is willing to make a full disclosure of all campaign funds as well as his personal finances.

One of the most demeaning aspects of politics is pulling these funds together," he said. "We will report all contributions as well as a statement of personal finances."

TEN DAYS TO REMEMBER

JUNE						
SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

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Bring your pennies to First-City's Main Office! We'll pay you \$1.05 for every 100 pennies received. Offer ends June 7.

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A Lincoln First Bank
Member FDIC

McHugh 'Disappointed' Cook Quit

Ithaca lawyer Matthew McHugh, a Democratic candidate for congress from the 27th District, said yesterday he was "disappointed" to learn that Assemblywoman Constance E. Cook (R-Ithaca) had withdrawn from the race and encouraged an open

primary on the Democratic side.

"Mrs. Cook said she withdrew because the Republican organization decided behind the scenes to support one candidate to the exclusion of others," McHugh said in a prepared statement.

Then he said, "An open primary is healthy. It encourages thorough discussion of the issues. I believe the Democratic primary will be open."

"One of the Democratic candidates in Broome County recently suggested that we

should unite behind him simply because he is from Broome County," McHugh said in his statement, referring to Town of Union supervisor Robert M. Kropp.

"This would be a mistake. It would stifle the political process just when it should be opened up."

McHugh said the people of Broome County and all citizens in the 27th District "should have the opportunity to select a candidate on the basis of merit rather than geography. Only in that way will we arrive at the best representative in Congress."

Holihan New Vestal Pastor

Myer Edgar M. Holihan, formerly pastor of St. Paul's Church in Rome, has succeeded the Rev. William M. Kelly as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Roman Catholic Church in Vestal. Father Kelly was transferred to a parish in Rome.

Monignor Holihan, 57, assumed his duties at Our Lady of Sorrows on May 24. He has served previously in churches in Utica, Syracuse, Lafayette and Edinboro.

He attended St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto and St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester.

Station Owner's Report Helps Police Save Life

A Syracuse man was in fair condition last night in Binghamton General Hospital after suffering an apparent heart attack and going two days without needed insulin shots because his common law wife allegedly neglected to administer the drug, according to state police.

The man, Robert J. Smith, about 50, of 419 Midland Drive, Syracuse, was discovered by state police and rushed to the hospital only by chance, according to Sgt. Walter Schumacher, of the state police substation at Deposit.

William Lee, a Deposit gas station operator, called state police after a car left his station and began weaving down Route 10 about 9 a.m. yesterday, Schumacher said.

time, took the call and stopped the car, driven by Mrs. Hickey of Syracuse. In the back seat of the car was Smith, unconscious, who had been in a coma for two days, according to Miss Hickey. Smith's common law wife, Schumacher said.

Smith, a diabetic, apparently was too intoxicated to give himself a shot of insulin, and Miss Hickey had no explanation why she didn't administer the drug, Schumacher said.

The couple reportedly was returning from a trip to New York City, Schumacher said, and was heading for a visit with friends in Albany when the car was stopped and the Deposit emergency squad summoned.

Smith later was admitted to Binghamton General Hospital, where he was listed in fair condition yesterday.

"He's one lucky son-of-a-gun," Schumacher said. "They were going on a long trip and if they hadn't have been stopped I don't think he would have made it."

Miss Hickey pleaded guilty of driving while intoxicated and driving without a license before Deposit Justice Paul Page. She was in Delaware County Jail last night pending payment of \$100 in fines, authorities said.