

## Borden, Doc: D-Day <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Doc Borden: D-Day

by David Cecelski. "[Listening to History](#) <sup>[2]</sup>," *News and Observer*. Published 1/9/2005. Copyrighted.  
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Richard "Doc" Borden was a Navy corpsman at Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944, when Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy, France. He was barely 18 years old and weighed only 118 pounds. More boy than man up until that day, he had never had a drink and his knowledge of guns came mostly from bird hunting near his home in Goldsboro. Thousands of such young men died on D-Day. The survivors, like Doc, were forever changed. For Doc, D-day led to a life of service to others: as a family physician in Goldsboro and Morehead City, a Scout leader and a mentor to young idealists, including -- 25 years ago -- me. Here is a little piece of his D-Day story, courtesy of an interview with Doc by Jan Herman, a historian in the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. It begins with Doc aboard a landing craft just off Omaha Beach.



Doc Borden. Photo by Chris Seward, 2005. To request permission for an interview with Doc Borden, please contact the News & Observer.

"The ramp dropped and there was this unbelievable sight, this pall of haze. Instead of being right up on the beach, we were several hundred yards out and as the boys went out in front of me, they dropped in the water to about their waist. All the horrible thing was that as we stepped off and started moving toward the shore, we were under fire. There were posts with Teller mines pointing to seaward and lots of bodies. I remember the coagulum of slimy blood in the water, and the When we reached the beach, there were howitzers, mortars and the 88s, machine gun fire, snipers. We would hear a shell coming and we would scoop out holes and stick our faces in them. All of us, I am sure, looked funny with our butts up. Once we heard the shell explode, we got up and somebody was calling "Corpsman" and I skipped over to him and did what had to be done there. It was a matter of exposing the wound and then sprinkle it with sulfa powder. Then jam him wit The shore was just covered with walkie-talkie radios, rifles, backpacks, ammunition boxes, gas masks, duffels, bodies. You couldn't go 40 feet without there being a burned-out something -- a tank, a gasoline truck, a jeep. Everybody that drop My friend Rick had one end of the stretcher and I had the other. We heard something coming in and both took a dive from the stretcher, I to the right and Rick to the left. It was just unbelievable, absolutely the loudest noise I've ever heard in r I looked and, maybe 10 feet to my left, was Rick. I screamed, "Rick, Rick, let's move it!" He didn't move and I called again, "Rick, Rick, come on, let's move over there by that tank." He didn't move, and then I picked up one of the rocks and hit I ran over to him. As I turned him, his helmet went to the side. ... I just looked at it in horror and I said, "Oh, my God, my friend." I started scrambling in my side pouch for that thing of serum albumin we had been told was a new lifesaving tool. I hooked it up and put the tourniquet on and was getting ready to stick the needle in his veins, and at that point, with gray matter just laying there in his helmet, I slowly wrapped the thing back up and put it in my pouch. Right now sitting here on my porch, I can look up and I can see the haze and the chaos, the dark green of the foliage on the hillside that the German trenches and gun emplacements were in. I literally stood up and screamed at the hillside, and And then an absolute warmth and peacefulness enshrouded me. It was as though something holy had descended around me, and I was at peace. About that time, somebody called "Corpsman!" I sort of snapped to. I did not do anything hero One of the most remarkable things was how, when someone was hit, they called out. But once you got them, they quieted. The ones that I remember became quiet and very stoic. There was a nearby drowning of colored troops. They had 13 men who came off in the deep water and just drowned. They were pulled out immediately and we used old-fashioned artificial respiration, the prone pressure of the American Red I remember him in my mind's eye. He was a little on the chubby side; his face was cold and beginning to be puffy. I rolled him over and gave artificial respiration, prone pressure. In a panic, I was getting nowhere. Finally, I rolled him back over I can both taste and feel the coldness of those lips to this day. And you know, this is doubly unique my being a little Southern boy. But it didn't faze me. You do what you do without any thought. But I did not get him back. At some point, probably after midnight, Dr. Guyton called us all together and said, "Look, you boys. Just stop a minute. Get out your canteen cups." He mixed some powdered lemonade from a bunch of K-rations with water and medical alcohol I don't know whether each of us had our cup or whether they passed it around, but that was significant to me. That was my very first drink. For his actions on Omaha Beach, Doc Borden was awarded the Bronze Star. Last summer, on the 60th anniversary of the Allied landing, he was one of the hundred D-Day veterans whom President Jacques Chirac invited to France and awa

### Additional information from NCpedia editors at the State Library of North Carolina: :

Doc Borden lived from October 29, 1925-December 20, 2012.

Memorial page for Dr. Richard Winstead Borden, Munden Funeral Home and Crematory: <http://www.mundenfuneralhome.net/notices/DrRichard-Borden> <sup>[3]</sup>

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