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January 2018

Robert Capa ...War Photographer

The orders came to *Life* war photographer Robert Capa in London from the United States Army in the last days of May of 1944: *You are not to leave your flat for more than an hour at a time. Your equipment must be packed.*

On June 5, 1944, Capa roamed the transfer ship U.S.S. *Henrico* with his Contax, aware that the London bureau of *Life* was already frantically waiting for his film. Hundreds of assault troops were waiting, too. For Capa, here were “the planners, the gamblers, and the writers of last letters.”

For the invasion Capa transferred to the U.S.S. *Samuel Chase*. At two A.M. on Tuesday, June 6, the loudspeaker on the boat broke up Capa’s poker game. Capa placed his invasion francs in his waterproof belt, grabbed his gas mask and inflatable lifeboat, and was served a pre-invasion breakfast of hotcakes, scrambled eggs, and sausages by the messboys of the *Chase*, dressed impeccably in their spotless whites. Later, many of the men would say that Capa was insane to go in with the first wave of the invasion when he did not have to.

In London, on the morning of June 6, *Life* picture editor **John Morris** waited anxiously. For the world and for *Life*, D-day was the most important day of the entire war. Morris’s only hope to meet *Life*’s Saturday closing deadline and scoop the world was to get original prints and negatives into a pouch that would leave Grosvenor Square at nine A.M. on Thursday, June 8, by motorcycle courier en route to a transatlantic flight.

The coast of Normandy was miles away when the first sounds of popping forced Capa down in his assault boat. In front of him, a mass of crossed steel girders formed an impossible barricade that ran the entire length of the Normandy coast and was loaded with as many as six million mines. As Capa got closer, massive explosions rocked the shore. Smoke rose from every side in vast plumes. Men, on fire, tried to escape the inferno. Jumping up, Capa stopped to take his famous picture of the platoon of men from his assault boat wading into the carnage that awaited them in the water. Mistaking his hesitation, the boatswain kicked Capa in the rear.

Suddenly, from the boil of the red ocean, Capa caught the face of a young, helmeted soldier under fire, manning his position half submerged, with the eerie towers of German obstacles behind him. Capa raised his camera and caught what would emerge from Omaha Beach as arguably the iconic image of the war. **(Page 2)**“I didn’t dare to take my eyes off the finder of my Contax and frantically shot frame after frame.” Then his camera jammed.

On the transport back to Weymouth, as Capa helped to load stretchers, the messboys in their white jackets and gloves, now covered in blood, were sewing up the dead in body bags. Capa got out fresh film to take one last shot. He used his Rolleiflex to record an emergency plasma transfusion on the deck and then collapsed. He later awakened in a bunk with a piece of paper around his neck: “Exhaustion case. No dog tags.” The total time Capa spent on Omaha Beach was approximately 90 minutes.

Back in England, Capa scribbled a note to Morris telling him that the action was all on the 35-mm. rolls, then got on board the next transport back to Normandy. Capa, who prided himself on not knowing what he shot, knew exactly what he had that day: four rolls full of what could well be the most stirring images of warfare ever created.



CMHS Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

**Tuesday,
January 16th
2018**

7:00 pm

At the
Petty Officers’
Mess
HCMS Tecumseh

is a non-profit registered society
which fosters the study of the
military and the police, and the heritage of
Canada, the British Empire, and the world
as well as the preservation of military
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month
at: Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh
1820 - 24th Street SW
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on
Tuesday, January 16th, 2018
19:00 (7:00 pm)

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.

Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

Introduction of guests, Minutes of last meeting Correspondence, Membership report Treasurer's report, Old business / New business Break, Show & Tell
The President, **Allan Ross** would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.



Rushed to the lab chief, the film was given to a young lab assistant named Dennis Banks, whose name would enter photography history. Morris waited upstairs, trying not to look at the clock. Then, from the darkroom the first call came from photographer Hans Wild, who had seen the astonishing images on the film and said, "Fabulous!" Morris had no time: "We need *contacts!* Rush, rush, *rush!*" More time passed. Then Dennis Banks burst into Morris's office, sobbing, "They're ruined! Ruined! Capa's films are all *ruined*. Banks had put Capa's films into the drying cabinet as usual, but was so frantic he closed the door with the heat on high, believing that would speed the process. Without ventilation, the heat melted all of the emulsion off the film. Morris held up the first three long strips of film one at a time. "It just looked like gray soup," he told me. But on the fourth roll, 11 images miraculously survived, and Morris was astounded by their power. (It is thought that Capa shot a total of 106 frames at Omaha.) The blurring from the drying cabinet had imbued the images with seismic drama .

Morris knew they were remarkable, but he had no time to study them. Grabbing the prints of the surviving 11 images, he placed them in glassine envelopes, in four different sets—one for *Life's* London office, one for the British government, one for the Pentagon, and one for the New York office, which would also receive the negatives. Morris then sped in his Austin through the deserted London streets. It was 3:30 A.M., Thursday. After being stamped at the Ministry of Information they were put on a transatlantic flight to Washington. The film went to the Pentagon for a quick look. Then the pictures cleared by censors and then couriered via train or shuttle flight to the New York office.

Minutes of last meeting / Calgary Military Historical Society

Meeting held on December 19, 2017 at the Petty Officer's Mess, HMCS Tecumseh

1. Meeting called to order By David Gale at 7:15 PM. 6 members in attendance.

Martin U. opens meeting tabling proposal that due to the low number of members and executive officers present, that the November Meeting's business and approvals be moved to the January 2018 meeting. Seconded by David G. Approved.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting. Minutes will be discussed for approval during the January 2018 meeting.

3. Newsletter. The newsletter will be discussed for approval during the January 2018 meeting.

4. Treasures Report.

The Treasurer's Report will be discussed for approval during the January 2018 meeting.

5. Membership Report.

The Membership Report will be discussed for approval during the January 2018 meeting.

6. Correspondence:

- Email received from the Military Museums. Melissa Taylor, Customer Service Representative is new Lecture Coordinator.

7. Announcements:

- AACCA's Thorncliff Gun Show is on January 12, 2018

- 2nd Annual Calgary Militaria Show to be held at Hillhurst Sunnyside on June 16, 2018

8. Old Business.

- Christmas/Holiday Dinner - Location & Date still to be determined.

9. New Business: - None

BREAK

10. Ticket book auction: - Not conducted.

11. Show and Tell:

Brad M. - Pickups during trip to Bosnia Oct. Yugoslavia military items: wedge cap date 1953, Tito

Medal of Bravery & a pen created from a rifle round and casing.

Stu J. - Files for Indra R. all with info on Moreville Wood events 1918.

Al D. - US 105 howitzer shell casing dated 1955.

Martin U. - Discusses visit to Honolulu Memorial & Capt. Jon Swanson (MOH) & S. Sgt. Larry Harrison (Silver Star) both KIA in Cambodian Feb. 26, 1971 during an action that Martin U. participated in. Both memorialized in Honolulu and remains interred at Arlington Feb. 2002.

12. Adjournment:

David G. calls for motion to adjourn. Member Martin U. moves to adjourn. Seconded by Brad M. Approved.

Meeting Adjourned. 20:32

The June 19, 1944, issue of *Life* bannered, "BEACHHEADS OF NORMANDY; The Fateful Battle for Europe Is Joined by Sea and Air." The accompanying story told how Capa had gotten his shots: "Immense excitement of moment made Photographer Capa move his camera and blur the picture. . . . As he waded out to get aboard, his cameras were thoroughly soaked."

In the chaos of the D-day landings, Capa's 11 frames were almost the only images to survive. That Capa's film survived at all was wholly because he carried it to England himself. The unknown soldier submerged in the water took years to identify. He was mistakenly assumed to be Edward Regan, but in the 1990s it was discovered that he was actually a private first class, Huston "Hu" Riley, 16th Regiment, Company F, who had landed on a sandbank not far from Capa. Stalled for half an hour, Private Riley made a run for it and was hit by machine-gun fire in his shoulder. In Richard Whelan's *This Is War!*, Riley says he was saved by "a buck sergeant . . . and a photographer with a camera around his neck. . . . All I could think of was, 'What in the hell is this guy doing here?'"

In 1947, Capa was awarded the Medal of Freedom, and also saw the birth of a long-held dream: a cooperative for photographers called Magnum. By the early 50s he had told photographer Marc Riboud, "Photography is finished. Television is the future." He worried that his travels on assignment with John Steinbeck in the Soviet Union would get him blacklisted. In 1954, at 40 and in debt to Magnum for medical bills, Capa accepted an assignment from *Life* to go to Japan. While he was there, John Morris suggested to Capa that he cover the struggle in Indochina that would become the Vietnam War. Capa could not turn down the chance—or the money: \$2,000. "Price subject to considerable upraising," Morris wired. "if it becomes hazardous." After giving the Indochina assignment, he had second thoughts: "I called him. I said, 'Bob, you do not have to do this. It is not our war.' But Capa had made up his mind. "This is going to be a beautiful story," he told two reporters traveling to the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam. Then he leapt off the jeep to photograph French artillerymen lobbing shells at the Vietminh. A few minutes later, an explosion rocked the convoy.

Capa, his left hand clutching his camera, became the first American war correspondent killed in the Vietnam conflict. In



one of the last photos taken of him alive he is striding along with a French officer at a landing strip, his camera around his neck.

One of his last photo's in Vietnam