

Did you know?
January is
Glaucoma
Awareness
Month.

☆☆☆

WORLD WAR II VETERANS DISCUSSION GROUP
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January 2015

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 28th at 2:00 pm in the Hagaman Library DeMayo Community Room.

This month, Robert Swirsky, retired World War II tech sergeant, will speak to us about his experiences and the people he knew during the war. A veteran who served at Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland and Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge), Mr. Swirsky is also a noted author of three books. His first book, titled *My War*, tells of combat situations from Normandy to 30 miles short of Berlin under General Maurice Rose, who headed the Third Armored Division, First Army. His second book, *Recollections*, is about his years growing up in the north end of Bridgeport from age six to late teens. His third book, currently being finished, is called *Memories*, and is about the 46 years his family lived in Stratford and happenings that occurred after that time. It includes information that he has shared giving talks to local schools and organizations.



Above: Robert Swirsky in a recent photo (left), and as he looked in World War II (right).



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Carl Timmreck 1/1
Jill Cete 1/6
Lillian Scalia 1/17
William B. Jackson 1/18
Santo Tutino 1/18
Pat Baker 1/23
Mary Ann Anderson 1/24



U.S. Marines in the Atlantic, Europe, and Africa During World War II

From the WWII 50th Anniversary Fact Sheet Researched by Alexander Molnar, Jr.

At its peak strength in 1945, the Marine Corps had more than 485,000 Marines serving on active duty. Overshadowed in history by Marines who fought World War II's Pacific island battles, fewer than 6,000 Marines participated in the Atlantic, North African and European campaigns. Before World War II, Marines served in various European and North African embassies as attaches. However, that role changed with the outbreak of hostilities between the Allies and the Axis powers in 1941. More than 4,000 combat Marines arrived in Reykjavik, Iceland, in July 1941 to augment British forces already in place to prevent Iceland from falling to the Germans. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Marines left Iceland by early March 1942.

Masters of amphibious warfare tactics, Marines served as planners for the North African, Mediterranean and Normandy invasions. Their expertise in developing techniques for large-scale amphibious operations against heavily defended beaches proved invaluable. Marines trained four U.S. Army infantry divisions in assault from the sea tactics prior to the North African landings. Leading the way during Operation Torch, the November 1942 North Africa invasion, Marines went ashore at Arzeu, Algeria, and moved overland to the port of Oran, where they occupied the strategic Spanish fortress at the northern tip of the harbor. Another Marine detachment aboard the cruiser USS *Philadelphia* landed on 10 November 1942 at the port of Safi, French Morocco, and secured the airport against sabotage until US Army forces arrived the following day. (Cont. Pg 2)

GEM OF THE MONTH:

"Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom."
— Thomas Jefferson

LAST MONTH'S MEETING — THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY!**U.S. Marines in the Atlantic, Europe, and Africa** *(continued from Page 1)*

Assigned to the secretive world of spies and saboteurs were 51 Marines who served with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to engage in behind-the-lines operations in North Africa and Europe from 1941 to 1945. These OSS Marines served with partisan and resistance groups in several countries.

Shipboard detachments of Marines served throughout the landings in North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Normandy invasion as gun crews aboard battleships and cruisers. A 200-man detachment was normally carried aboard a battleship, while cruisers would have 80 Marines serving on board to man the secondary batteries of 5-inch guns providing fire for the landing forces.

During the 6 June 1944 Normandy invasion, Marines, renowned as expert riflemen, played a vital role reminiscent of the days of the sailing Navy when sharpshooters were sent to the "fighting tops." Stationed high in the superstructures of the invasion fleet, Marine riflemen fired at and exploded floating mines in the path of ships moving across the English Channel and at the Normandy shore.

On 29 August 1944, during the invasion of southern France, Marines from the battleship USS *Augusta* and the cruiser USS *Philadelphia* went ashore in Marseilles harbor to accept the surrender of more than 700 Germans who had fortified island garrisons.

Although few, these proud Marines played a vital role in the Atlantic, African and European campaigns of World War II.



Britain's King George VI inspects the U.S. Marine detachment of battleship USS *Washington* (BB-56) on 7 June 1942.