Colleville-sur-Mer, August 2, 2014

Dear friends, Rotarians and Inner-Wheel,

We are gathered here this morning to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Allied landing in Normandy. As representatives of the France-USA Inter-Country Committee, our thoughts turn first to our American friends.

I would like to begin by thanking all of the participants for being here with us this morning—our friends from Rennes in great number, and especially Patrick, our treasurer, who organized these two days.
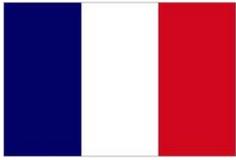
Of course, we regret the absence of our friends from the U.S., who were unable at the last minute to free up the time to be with us today after setting the date together. We decided to maintain the celebration nonetheless.

I would like to give special thanks to the entire board of our CIP here this morning: our vice-president, Max, our secretary, Daniel, and our treasurer, Patrick, our other vice-president, Robert having sent his regrets his absence today for family reasons.

CIP FRANCE USA (Section Française)
Siège social : C/o Novotel Paris Porte d'Asnières, 34 avenue de la porte d'Asnières, 75 017 PARIS (France)
Association Loi de 1901 .N° d'enregistrement : 93-2501

So we are gathered this morning in the cemetery of Colleville-sur-Mer to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Allied landing, organized under the code name "Operation Overlord." I would like to cite a few important figures for memory:

159,000: The number of American soldiers who landed on June 6, 1944 at midnight;

34,250: The number of American soldiers who landed on Omaha beach on June 6, 1944 at midnight;

23,250: The number of American soldiers who landed on Utah Beach on June 6, 1944 at midnight;

15,500: The number of Americans who landed by parachute on June 6, 1944 at midnight;

225: The number of American Rangers of the Second Battalion engaged at the Pointe du Hoc on June 6, 1944;

2,500: Americans lost on Omaha beach on D-Day.

The military cemetery that overlooks Omaha Beach is the last resting place for 9,387 American soldiers who fell in combat. To quote President Obama, "Omaha—Normandy—was the beachhead of democracy."
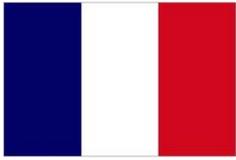
So, dear friends, we are gathered here this morning in the name of Rotarian friendship and particularly for our American Rotarian friends, as well as all of the others, to render warm and grateful homage to those who did not hesitate to give their lives in the service of freedom.

But I would also like to render special homage to a Rotarian friend of the Rotary Club of Poughkeepsie, New York, to which I had the honor of belonging for two years in 1995 and 1996.

The night of June 5 to 6, 1944, airborne operations were conducted to secure the landing operations. This specifically involved the parachuting of the **101st** and **82nd** airborne divisions in the northeast of Contentin. These operations were preceded by the placing of scouts and followed by **gliders** from these same divisions. Their goal was to protect the Western flank of the landing area, and especially to monitor the exits from **Utah Beach**.

One of these scouts was Frank Hazard. He was a member of the glider team, and subsequently participated in the entire campaign right to Berlin. Frank, a Rotarian from the Poughkeepsie club, was the one who greeted me when I first arrived in the club, where he was responsible for protocol (sergeant at arms). We got along famously and often spoke of this period, of which he was very proud. He never wanted to return to France, despite my invitations. He is no longer with us today, but I would like to connect him to our celebration in the name of the Rotarian friendship that unites us all.

Dear friends, the time has now come to lay this wreath in souvenir of our American friends, who, with many others, sacrificed their lives and their youth, in the name of liberty. So, in the name of all of our friends and members of the France-USA and USA-France ICC, and in the name of all Rotarians, it is particularly in honor of their memory that we lay this wreath.

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Two months ago, President Barack Obama said on these same beaches, "We must render homage to those who bear this memory, knowing that we cannot live in freedom if free men are not willing to die for it."

This symbol of liberty among peoples, guarantee of peace in the world, an objective which the Rotary has long embraced, has enabled us, the Rotary ICC members, to gather this morning to fulfill the wishes of Rotary International President Gary Wang
"light up Rotary"

I would now like to ask Ray, who made a round trip specially for this occasion, and whom I thank from the bottom of my heart for his participation, to render homage to the American flag, and then to accompany me with Max to lay the wreath.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I thank you.

Jean-Marie POINSARD
Chairman of the France-USA ICC
Past 1770 District Governor 2011-2012

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