



COURTESY OF MATTHEW BALLARD

This is the grave of George J. Quinn in Normandy American Cemetery.

### OVERLOOKED ORLEANS

# Medina native rests at Normandy American Cemetery

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Dedicated in 1956, the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer encompasses 172.5 acres and serves as a final resting place for over 9,000 soldiers killed in action in Europe. Although the site was primarily used to bury those killed during Operation Overlord and the Normandy Breakout, many families requested that Normandy serve as the place of eternal rest for their deceased veterans regardless of where they were killed.

Wandering the sprawling fields lined with white crosses reveals ornately decorated stones etched in gold leaf, denoting the graves of men who received the Congressional Medal of Honor. One stone melds into the thousands of plainly lettered marble crosses, the stone of Sgt. George J. Quinn.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., on Sept. 5, 1924, Quinn spent most of his life growing up in the vicinity of North Ridgeway. After graduating from Barker, he spent a short period of time working for Harrison Radiator in Lockport before he was inducted into service in March 1943. Basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri and Camp Pickett, Virginia was followed by deployment to England in October 1943.

On June 6, 1944, Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy in an effort to establish a foothold in France, resulting in the deaths of over 4,000 men. The capture of Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches did not mark the end of the Normandy operation, as troops continued to push through the thick hedgerows of the bocage. On July 22, 1944, Sgt. Quinn and the 112th Infantry landed at Normandy and began the process of breaking out of St. Lo.

The timeline of events during the months of July and August suggest that Quinn was wounded while fighting in the bocage on August 7th, to which he was awarded the Purple Heart. On

Aug. 28, 1944, the 112th Infantry along with the remainder of 28th Division arrived in Paris, greeted by crowds of onlookers who welcomed their liberators with cheerfulness and relief. The following day the division marched up Avenue Hoche to the Arc de Triomphe and down the Champs Elysees as they progressed north towards their next objective.

On Sept. 1, 1944, the 112th Infantry travelled by truck to Compiègne where the men were again greeted by the newly liberated French. After enjoying a meal of coffee, biscuits, and other local delicacies, Sgt. Quinn and

his unit progressed towards a wooded area north of the town. At 7:30 a.m., segments of the 112th were met by heavy resistance from German soldiers camped around the outskirts of Compiègne. Finally, at 11:15am, the unit was able to progress further north, but not without suffering a number of casualties.

George Quinn, only four days shy of his 20th birthday, was killed in action while pushing through these woods. His body was interred at the Normandy American Cemetery, among the thousands of others who sacrificed their lives for the liberation of France and the European continent.

On Wednesday, the Orleans County Legislature will commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the DDay Landing at 4:10pm in the Legislature Chambers. Descendants of WWII veterans who participated in the initial landing on June 6, 1944 and descendants of veterans who participated in various engagements in the Normandy region from June 7 – Aug. 30, 1944 are also invited to attend. If you would like to contribute information to Department of History, community members are encouraged to contact me either at [Matt.Ballard@orleanscountyny.gov](mailto:Matt.Ballard@orleanscountyny.gov) or at (585) 589-4174.