

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER MEMORIAL COMMISSION

*It's time to build a national
memorial to Dwight D. Eisenhower.*



Eisenhower Stories

Ike Accepts Responsibility ... For Better or Worse

General Eisenhower spent the five months after January 1944 supervising every aspect of planning for the Allied invasion of Europe. With the mission cloaked in deepest secrecy, tension grew as D-Day approached. In the three months leading up to D-Day, planned for June 5th, pre-attack bombing and strafing of the landing areas and their support systems had already cost the lives of 12,000 allied airmen shot down by German forces. By June 4th over 6,000 ships, 9,000, and 150,000 men had been assembled and organized for the attack. As Supreme Commander, Eisenhower could call upon many admirals and generals and huge planning staffs for advice, but everyone knew that final responsibility rested solely on the shoulders of the man from Abilene.

Only two elements of the invasion could not be predicted: the weather and the outcome. Both were in doubt.

Many books, movies, and documentaries over the sixty years since D-Day have portrayed in riveting detail the drama and the last-minute decisions that were required by the ever-changing weather forecasts. The assault on the Normandy beaches was postponed for 24 hours due to turbulent weather. When Eisenhower decided to attack on June 6th, it was by no means certain that the weather would cooperate.

To everyone around him, Eisenhower exuded confidence and optimism. After the war, however, he admitted to Mamie how deeply worried he was about the grave situation. Nonetheless, it was his duty to conceal every doubt lest his subordinate commanders begin to question what they and their men were about to do.

His staff drafted an order of the day for distribution to every individual in the Allied Expeditionary Force on D-Day. Eisenhower made many revisions to the document in order to reduce it to a single page that could be easily carried in a pocket. The last two sentences were:

*"I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle.
We will accept nothing less than full victory!"*

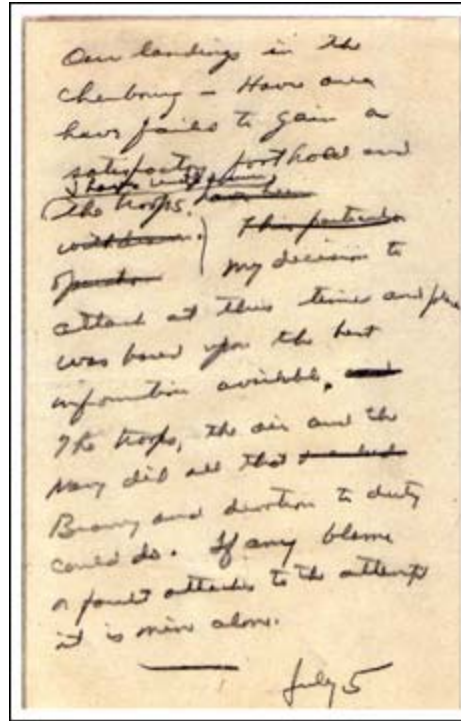
*Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this
great and noble undertaking."*

On June 5th after having made the fateful decision to launch the attack on the next morning, Ike wrote down a very different message. He shared his scribbling with no one. He folded the message neatly and placed it in his wallet. The statement never saw the light of day until after the invasion and the war was won, but it says a great deal about the character of the man who wrote it.

"Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do.

If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."

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July 5

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