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PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI 65473
VOICE: 573-563-4145
FAX: 573-563-4012
BY: Marti Yoshida
EMAIL: martha.l.yoshida.civ@mail.mil

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Engineer Museum receives D-Day uniform donation

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – There is a new Army uniform in town at Fort Leonard Wood.

The uniform was worn by an Army engineer who, though wounded, was one of the few bulldozer operators to survive clearing mines and obstacles for infantry, while under intense enemy fire during the D-Day landing on Omaha Beach.

This uniform won't be worn again; instead it will be displayed as a reminder of one Soldier's courage during World War II.

On Sept. 30, the Family of Pvt. Vinton W. Dove, 37th Engineer Battalion, donated Dove's military jacket, which included the Distinguished Service Cross, to the U.S. Army Engineer School Museum at Fort Leonard Wood.

Dove's son, Vinton G. Dove, and daughter-in-law, Pat Dove, attended the donation ceremony of Dove's artifacts.

"I started looking for Distinguished Service Crosses and Silver Stars earned by engineers on D-Day back in 2008," said Troy Morgan, USAES Museum director. "Dove's was the most significant, based on the impact of what he did on the success of the operation."

"I was able to locate Pvt. Dove's son around 2009 or 2010," Morgan said. "I inquired if the Family was interested in donating the uniform and medals to the Engineer Museum; there was no interest."

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But Morgan remained persistent. He publicized Dove's story, and arranged to have breakfast with Vinton's son in 2012, when he explained the importance of historic artifacts to Army museums and how the Engineer Museum uses artifacts to build commitment and esprit de corps in engineer Soldiers.

"I wasn't going to give that jacket up," the younger Dove said. "I had in mind which one of my grandkids I was going to give it to, so they could keep it and pass on the stories. I had no idea anybody else would be interested in it."

In time, the son decided a donation was the right thing to do, because of the museum's mission to teach.

"If you have a history to look at, it puts pressure on your descendants to stay the straight and narrow," he said. "They have something to aim for."

"It means a great deal that students will see what people do under duress and everything else," Vinton G. said. "So for the students, if it helps them, I'm thrilled. I really am."

Morgan said being able to do an exhibit about engineers on D-Day is among the most impressive things that he has done in his 10 years at the Engineer Museum.

"We went from having no artifacts, to probably the best artifact we could have ever dreamed of," he said. "The current collection includes artifacts such as life preserver belts, but nothing that tells the personal story of engineers on D-Day."

Morgan said, "A Distinguished Service Cross is a significant medal, and D-Day was a very significant battle. Dove's actions were important to making the Omaha landing successful.

The engineer museum will use Pvt. Dove's uniform and medal to put a face on the engineer actions that made D-Day a success."

Along with members of the Engineer Regiment, the current commander and command sergeant major of Dove's unit attended the donation ceremony.

Lt. Col. Sebastian Pastor, 37th Engineer Battalion commander, said, "We have an eagle standard, which is a booklet that we give our paratroopers. In that standard -- the first page -- we read off Pvt. Dove's citation."

"He is the epitome of what we expect our paratroopers to do, and that is leading from the front, taking the initiative and getting the mission accomplished," Pastor said. "So, we use him as an example for today's paratroopers of the values that we look for paratroopers to execute."

When it was donated, Dove's jacket was protected by the same plastic bag from 1947, when his wife had it dry cleaned.

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Dove's son said he thinks his dad, who lived to be 83, would have been pleasantly surprised by the donation, though they never discussed what Dove wanted to have happen with the uniform.

"I think his attitude would have been, 'The heroes are still on the beach.' That was his feeling about it. I never heard him say anything other than that," Vinton G. said. "He would say, 'I'm not one of the heroes. I just did what I was told. I'm lucky I made it across the beach.'"

According to Vinton G., Gen. Omar Bradley, who witnessed Pvt. Dove's actions on D-Day, recommended Dove for the Medal of Honor, but it was declined by then Gen. Dwight Eisenhower.

Bradley reportedly said, "I never will forget this guy Dove going up and down the beach, just like it was Saturday afternoon, and if he was home plowing a driveway, and there were bombs blowing up all around him and mortars and artillery and machine guns were going off."

Included in the donation is a canteen cup that Dove used to carve all the locations he served during World War II.

A copy of Dove's story can be found online at:
www.wood.army.mil/usaes/library/documents/Vignette_Dove.pdf.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl. (1) Photo

Photo cutline: *Vinton G. Dove talks to members of the Engineer Regiment about his father, Pvt. Vinton W. Dove, a bull dozer operator, who was instrumental during the Omaha beach landing on D-Day.*

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are

located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
