

Civil Air Patrol, Maryland Wing
**Civil Air Patrol's Cadet Davis Travels to Normandy w/ the Albert H. Small Institute:
Sacrifice for Freedom Institute**

(for CCTimes Release & North County News Release)

**Carroll Composite Squadron's Staff Sgt. Katelyn Davis
Travels to Normandy, Representing CAP**
(for Maryland Wing Release)

By Cadet Katelyn Davis
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Staff Sgt. Katelyn Davis, a member of Carroll Composite Squadron, recently participated in the Albert H. Small travel seminar on Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom Institute organized by National History Day in June 2011 to honor the fallen men and women of the D-Day campaign.

Fifteen high school student and teacher teams were selected from a national contest to engage in educational seminars, a trip to the National Mall in Washington D.C., and a trip to both Normandy and Paris in France . Each student was expected to read eight WWII books and research a specific soldier from their state prior to the actual seminar.

Staff Sgt. Davis researched CPT Edward Peters, commander of HQ Company, 506th PIR, 101st Airborne. With help from his son and college researchers, Cadet Davis was able to piece together her soldier's life from his days as a football star at McDaniel College to his actions on D-Day that posthumously awarded him the Bronze Star.

"It's a different experience getting to know a specific soldier first hand," Cadet Davis remarked about researching CPT Peters. "Most people only know the top names, like MacArthur and Patton, but looking into a specific soldier's life and trials brings WWII home."

Prior to leaving for France, Cadet Davis, her teacher, and the other student-teacher teams spent four days in Washington D.C., listening to lectures from professors at George Washington University and West Point, researching more of their soldiers and their respective units, visiting the National Mall, and attending the Marine Parade and the Changing of the Guard Ceremony. Cadet Davis actually participated in the wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington with four other students.

"It was a beautiful and awe-inspiring moment," Staff Sgt. Davis stated. "It felt great to finally show my gratitude for these brave men and women who had died protecting our freedoms."

Early on June 23rd, the fifth day, the participants arrived at Charles de Gaulle Airport. From there, the student-teacher teams were able to enjoy the fast-paced, colorful atmosphere of Paris , France . The next day the teams went to Pegasus Bridge , made famous by *The Longest Day*, then traveled to an intact German bunker.

"Looking out from the German bunker, I realized just how amazing the land invasion had been. The Germans had a clear, open path and such heavily-defended fortifications that it's a true miracle our boys made it. It just goes to show that those fighting for the common good will always win against a corrupted society."

The following day, the teams traveled to Ste. Mere-Eglise, the American Airborne Museum , the German Cemetery , and Pointe-du-Hoc. While traveling along the French countryside, Cadet Davis was able to pass through Vierville, known as her soldier's place of death. She was able to connect with her soldier while passing the fields in which had been littered with the machine gun nests he had taken by himself 67 years ago.

The last day in Normandy was devoted to visiting the beaches and the American cemetery. While at the cemetery, Cadet Davis and the other fifteen students presented eulogies at their soldiers' graves, honoring the men they had researched for several months. The visit to the cemetery ended with a few of the students folding the American flag, as Taps played quietly in the background.

The trip ended with a dinner at a Parisian palace, the students took time to reflect on their experiences and hopes traveling back to the United States .

"I realized through this trip and the research process that there's more than just statistics to battles. There are faces of men, young and old, rich and poor, from all different types of communities and societies that gave up all so that others may be freed. I truly hope to go back to the United States and honor these soldiers, sailors, and airmen in the best way possible: by helping to get their stories told."

Currently, Staff Sgt. Davis is heading a project to honor all Marylanders who died in the D-Day campaigns through publishing their stories online with the American Battlefield Monuments Commission. If you are interested in helping research a soldier, or if you have knowledge of a soldier who died in the Normandy campaign, feel free to contact Carroll Composite Squadron at: www.carrollcap.org. Also, Cadet Davis's participation in National History Day at Arlington Cemetery which was held in conjunction with the Institute can be viewed on <http://www.army.mil/article/60128/NationalHistoryDayParticipantslaywreathinArlington>

If you are interested in viewing Staff Sgt. Davis' research in its entirety, feel free to visit her website:

<http://38347415.nhd.weebly.com/index.html>