

# NEWS RELEASE

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### **Guide traces steps of Canadian soldiers on battlefields of Normandy**

*Waterloo, Ont. (April 25)* — Canadians are being challenged to trace the steps of their soldiers on the battlefields of Normandy and, as the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy approach, they're being armed with a unique travel guide.

*A Canadian's Guide to the Battlefields of Normandy* by Terry Copp traces the routes of the soldiers from the beaches near Courseulles-sur-Mer on D-Day, June 6, 1944, to the Seine River near Rouen almost three months later.

Published by the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation and the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies, the 176-page guide contains detailed travel information and itineraries with maps for nine battlefield tours. There are 50 photographs.

"I want to encourage Canadians to set out on their own journey to the battlefields," says Copp, professor and chair of history at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont. "Let the guide take you not just to the memorials and museums, but to the very villages and fields where young Canadians fought with such bravery."

They fought — without promise of reward — for the liberation of Europe, Copp writes in the guide. "We owe them not just remembrance, but informed memory, for they are a vital part of our identity as a people."

The author himself has travelled extensively in Normandy. He is co-author of the five-volume *Maple Leaf Route* (1983-88) and of *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (1990). Both won C.P. Stacey Book Awards. His most recent book, *The Brigade, 1939-1945*, was published in 1992.

Copp asks his readers to look at the battlefields through the eyes of Canadian soldiers. "If you stand out at water's edge when the tide is half-way out and look to the

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beach wall," Copp writes, "you can, with a little imagination, understand what the infantry faced that [D-Day] morning."

Copp is unabashedly, though not uncritically, supportive of the efforts of the Canadian armed forces in the First and Second World Wars and in peacekeeping missions today. "It is important for Canadians to support the armed forces," he says, because they have had a predominantly positive influence around the world.

"Canadians ought to understand the roles they played in World War II — their purposes and contexts," he said. "Commanders made mistakes. Bad things happened. But I try to put those things into context. World War II wasn't a game to be judged."

Copp has little patience with "armchair generals." He writes in the guide: "As you tour the Canadian battlefields you will obtain some impression of the challenges faced by these volunteer citizen-soldiers who helped to win the Battle of Normandy. As armchair generals you will no doubt have your own views on how the battles should have been planned.

"Remember that the men who actually fought the battles lacked the 20-20 hindsight which we possess today. No one knew what the outcome of individual battles would be or how long the campaign in Normandy might last. And no one knew exactly what was required of them. . . .

"What we do know is that Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen made a vital contribution to the defeat of Hitler and the liberation of Europe."

The first part of the guide — of use to anyone travelling in Normandy — offers information on travel arrangements, accommodation, restaurants, and things to see and do in Normandy. It provides descriptions, addresses, and telephone and fax numbers.

The second is a series of itineraries with full-color, fold-out maps for nine battlefield tours on the first part of the Canadian army's 'Maple Leaf Route': The D-Day Landings, First Encounters with 12th SS, Carpiquet and Caen, Operation "Atlantic," Operation "Spring," Operation "Totalize," Operation "Tractable," Closing the Falaise Gap, and The Pursuit to the Seine. Each is prefaced by a historical introduction, lists places of interest, and contains information on how to get there.

There are also appendices on senior Canadian commanders in Normandy, the First Canadian Army, the organization of Canadian army units, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and suggested readings.

Published in both French and English, the guide is available in bookstores for \$22.95. For more information, call Laurier at (519) 884-0710 ext. 3389.