

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Louis Mervis

CSUN student Ana Mejia interviewed Louis Mervis as part of an upper-division English class assignment on September 14, 2001. The interviews she and her classmates completed are now the World War II Survivors Oral History Project. In the interview, Mervis discusses his military service during World War II. In this clip, he recounts his experiences landing on Omaha Beach, D-Day, June 6, 1944.

Transcript:

LM: The problem at Normandy beach was the— the ocean or the tides at that particular point had a practice of causing ripples in the shallow— in the shallow waters of the beach, causing ships to get stuck in the sand. It was there, in that type of landing, that most of the landing crafts were shelled by the guns at the German gun emplacements in the hill back of the beachhead. Of the hundred and eighty-five men on that LCI only eighty-five of us got off. The others were either killed or badly wounded. All—LCI number 85 hit the beach at approximately 7:30 a.m. on D-Day. After we were exposed to gunfire and many of the— many are wounded, we were able to back off and we took the casualties to a Hospital Ship. We unloaded them and later in the day, Company C of the 6th Beach Battalion, approximately 2:30 in the afternoon, hit Omaha Beach. We hit the beach together with the 1st Infantry Division. We were very practiced in invasion landings at that time, and I remember dodging the shells along with the other soldiers and trying to squeeze my whole body into my helmet, very similar to a turtle, to escape the fragments of the shells. We finally got on the beach to a dune-site and we proceeded to collect ourselves and take care of the wounded. Together with various other episodes that I experienced on the beach, the one that I recall with sad emotions is working with the Graves and Registration Army personnel, of gathering the wounded and the dead out of the water as they were swept ashore days later from the initial invasion.