

Robert Schaefer and the 75th Anniversary of D-Day

by Kathy Kendrick, FSPE



Title scene from “Here Am I, Send Me,” by DevinSuperTramp, <https://youtu.be/XUuL5ksxPT0>.

Thousander Robert Schaefer, venerated former editor of *Telicom*, recently shared with me some exciting news. He had the extraordinary opportunity of participating in the 75th anniversary of D-Day in an incredibly moving way. Robert and his group, Team Freedom, led the airborne operation that marked the beginning of the anniversary event by parachuting into Normandy. Two remarkable teams worked together to orchestrate this notable jump: Team Freedom and Team Gold Star. Team Freedom is a group made up of retired Special Forces members and their families. Team Gold Star consists of Scoti Domeij—the mother of fallen soldier Kristoffer “Kris” Domeij—and the Army Ranger veterans who knew and served with Kris. Some of the members of these two jump teams actually had grandfathers who were there in Normandy on D-Day in 1944.

Because this jump into Normandy on the 75th anniversary of D-Day was such a momentous

occasion, a film crew was on hand to document the experience. The product is the extraordinary 40-minute film titled, “Here Am I, Send Me,” which can be viewed on DevinSuperTramp’s YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/XUuL5ksxPT0>.

To say this remarkable film is “moving” would be an incredible understatement. I watched this film after Robert shared it with me, and I have to admit: I did not simply view this film. I *experienced* it. I *felt* it. I was changed by it.

About the film, Robert appropriately warned, “For those of you who served—even the big, tough SpecOps guys—you should grab a box of tissues before you start it. Being in Normandy for the 75th was a very moving experience, and the film crew managed to capture that in an amazing way. While the film features us, it’s really about those who served and fought and died on D-Day. Even the name of the film honors their memory.”

As the film opens, the narrator explains, “This film is not a history lesson. It is a film of remembrance, like a keepsake, to remind you of that person, or that place that changed you. I tread on hallowed ground with this topic and hope to invite the feeling of sobriety and reverence it has brought to me, to you.”

In a moving scene filled with tangible emotion—just after parachuting into Normandy—Gold Star Mother Scoti Domeij tearfully professed, “I’m here to honor my son and all the mothers who lost their sons here.”

Retired Army Ranger Bill Dunham, who participated in the jump as a member of Team Freedom—and is the grandson of a World War II veteran—shared this touching moment from his experience:

When I landed, I pulled my flag out from behind my back—you know, I jumped it in—and I had the flag folded up, and I held it out. And I saw a French woman tearing up because she saw me holding this flag. And I’m sure she knew what it meant. And she came over to me, and she embraced me, and she teared up, and she kissed the flag. Just all of that, you know—it’s really been an emotional day.

Very powerful. And I’m just grateful for the opportunity. Just the fact that I had an opportunity to participate in something so extraordinary, to think about what so many people sacrificed for and be able to commemorate the day with a jump almost 75 years later to the day, and to do it with a World War II paratrooper, a Gold Star Mom, another ranger who was

thinking of his grandfather, me thinking of my grandfather...

Retired Army Ranger Matthew Griffin, a member of Team Gold Star, also had a grandfather who served in World War II. Griffin honored his grandfather’s memory not only with his participation in the 75th anniversary jump, but also with the following inspiring message:

I know, personally, that if I were to tell my grandfather, “Oh, you’re the greatest generation,” he would roll his eyes at me and go, “You’re going to take that as a statement, not as a challenge?” And I think that’s what it should be. It should be a challenge. We should be the greatest generation. We need to be the ones saving the environment. We need to be the ones ending the wars. We need to fix our problems.

Any effort to sum up this film with words will fall short, for it truly needs to be experienced. My feeble attempt at a description would have to begin by saying that this film depicts humanity at its best. It is a film about good people doing good things. It’s about people giving of themselves for the benefit of others—sometimes all of themselves, and sometimes for people they don’t even know. It’s been said that there is no greater display of love than laying down your life for another. This film beautifully captures the brotherly love that today’s world needs so much more of.

I hope every Thousander will take the time to experience this film and be inspired by the goodness that resonates from it. **Ω**