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## 'We did the best we could...'

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Author: MARGARET FOSMOE  
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### Document Text

SOUTH BEND -- Harold Lomax, 91, remembers clearly the day 66 years ago when he and his comrades were ordered ashore on the bloody beaches of France.

One young man in his unit was killed immediately.

"We had been in the planning stages for a long time. We knew what was going to happen and why," said Lomax, of Mishawaka.

He was among those gathered Sunday at United Auto Workers Local 5 for a Democratic unity rally and indoor picnic to mark the 66th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied invasion of France during World War II.

The gathering included applause and thanks from the crowd -- and tears of emotion from some of the veterans.

The Allies storming the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944, was the largest amphibious invasion in history. The mission helped hasten the end of the war.

Lomax, who retired from the military with the rank of master sergeant, was a member of the Army engineering corps that had been based in England for months, helping prepare for the invasion.

The first Allied troops landed on the beaches about 6:30 a.m. June 6. "It was cold, rainy and windy, with high waves," Lomax said.

Lomax was among a follow-up assault, going ashore that afternoon. He vividly remembers the carnage he saw -- blood and hundreds of dead bodies.

"We had certain duties. We did the best we could under the circumstances," he said.

Some excellent films about World War II, including "Saving Private Ryan," give a sense of what that day was like, Lomax said. But movies can't capture the anticipation and fear of participating in such a battle, he said.

There were 20 soldiers in Lomax's military section. He attended reunions with other survivors for years, until age and illness made such get-togethers impossible. "I think," Lomax told the audience Sunday, his voice cracking with tearful emotion, "I'm the last man."

His words drew a standing ovation from the crowd.

Lomax worked as an accountant in the South Bend area for 50 years. He was recalled to military service in the 1950s, serving in Germany during the Korean War. He and his wife, Helen, went to Normandy in 1994 for ceremonies to mark the 50th anniversary of the invasion.

The veterans in attendance were lauded by various speakers, including U.S. Rep. Joe Donnelly and Indiana Speaker of the House B. Patrick Bauer.

Members of Miller's Vets, a drill team consisting of local homeless veterans, served as the honor guard. Miller's Vets was established by veteran and retired county judge Robert L. Miller Sr.

St. Joseph County Commissioner Dave Thomas presented an honorary key to the county to John Pishnoff, 90, of South Bend, who served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific for four years during World War II. Pishnoff was injured on duty during his service.

Pishnoff's late brother Henry was a participant and survivor of D-Day.

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Credit: Tribune Staff Writer

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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