

Charles Norman Shay

Charles was born in Bristol, Connecticut in 1924. At the age of 6 his family moved home to Indian Island. He attended schools across the river in Old Town and graduated from Old Town High School in 1942. In April of 1943 he was drafted into the United States Army and trained as a medical technician, a "medic". Following Basic Training and Medical School Training as a surgical technician he was sent to England where he was assigned to 1st Infantry Division, 16th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion and had his first taste of combat at Omaha Beach on 6 June 1944, when thousands of US and Allied Troops stormed the beaches of Normandy now remembered as "D-Day". Units participating in the first waves of the invasion suffered 50% casualties, cut down by German gunfire. Charles was able to save the lives of many of his comrades who had been critically wounded by pulling them from the treacherous seas to dry land to keep them from drowning. The Army honored him with the Silver Star for his unselfish heroism on that day on Omaha Beach.

The following spring in March of 1945 the squadron that Charles was attached to was assigned the mission of securing a beach-head following the crossing of the Rhine river at Remagen, Germany. During this action the Squadron became separated from other units and were cut off by German forces. On March 25 Charles and other members of the Squadron became prisoners of war. He was released on 12 April 1945 and shortly thereafter the 2nd World War came to an end.

In 1950 Charles served for one year in the Korean War assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division, 7th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion and was awarded the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters. He served in both the US Army and US Air Force. While serving with the Air Force he was assigned to a Weather Squadron and participated in "Operation Castle" an Atomic Bomb Test at Eniwetok Proving Ground, Marshall Islands in the winter of 1954. Following his retirement in 1964 he moved to Vienna, Austria (the home of his wife), where he was able to gain employment with the International Atomic Energy Agency which has its headquarters in Vienna. He worked for the next twenty years and went into retirement at the end of December 1984. In the spring of 1985 Charles was recalled by the UN and offered the position of Security Officer for the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Vienna Office. A position he held for the next two and one-half years. Still not having enough of working he went to work for the Vienna Branch of Cary International Limousine Service as chauffeur and guide in the city of Vienna for the next six years.

In the year of 2003 Charles and his wife moved back to his home on Indian Island, but the joy of finally being retired was short lived, marred by the death of his wife of almost fifty-four years three months after returning home.

Today Charles has established a small Family Museum in the "Teepee" on Indian Island to honor members of his family that include Joseph Nicoliar, Florence Nicoliar Shay, Lucy Nicoliar Poolaw and Leo Shay and all members of the Penobscot Indian Nation.

WORLD WAR II POW

