

I'm traveling in France and Belgium, so my thoughts this week are a bit sparse. However, allow me a few points of view:

1. The American cemetery in Normandy is an overwhelming witness to sacrifice. The crosses and stars of David that continue to stand at attention across the acres of green lawn remind us how fragile our freedom is and how costly it can be to maintain. May we honor their ultimate sacrifice with lives that further freedoms for all.
2. In the shadow of the American cemetery lies Omaha beach. It no longer possesses the markers of death and destruction found there 75 years ago. Indeed, to see the beach now you would never know what happened there. Children squeal with delight in the surf. A dog wrestles a buoy in the same. And parents watch as the day lingers on. The juxtaposition of these two scenes--storming the beaches in '44 and the current proceedings--profoundly move me.
3. The German cemetery in Normandy possesses a pittance of the people that the Allied cemeteries possess. Makes sense, I suppose. However, the cemetery is well worth attending, and the presentation there is deeply moving. Some German soldiers may have been true believers. However, many were scared and wide-eyed youth thrust into a war that they did not desire. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year olds line the lawn at this cemetery as well. A waste.
4. The Peace Museum in Caen is testament to the various and many elements that moved the world to war in the late '30s and '40s. It stands as a classic reminder that we act in ways that we may think are best, and we have no idea of how things may ultimately end up. Powerful quote near the end of the Peace Museum exhibit:

*The war years taught people to live in a daily atmosphere of blind
Violence, inhuman treatment, racial hatred, aggression, rule-
bending and lawless behaviour that had lost all power to surprise.
The trivialisation of all that is worst in us is part of the Second
World War's tragic heritage.*

5. The Bayeux Tapestry is a delightfully playful and amazingly intricate weaving of the story of William the Conqueror. If you know the story, Harold loses, and William is proof that there is always a second chapter in life: He began life as William the Bastard. . .