

Cantigny to Commemorate 65th Anniversary of D-Day

More than 150 World War II veterans expected for memorial ceremony and dedication of historic D-Day landing craft on June 6

WHEATON, IL, May 19, 2009 — The First Division Museum at Cantigny Park, part of the McCormick Foundation, plans to honor World War II veterans and commemorate the 65th anniversary of D-Day on Saturday, June 6, from 9 am to 4 pm. The public is invited to attend, and events will take place rain or shine.

“Cantigny is proud to welcome and recognize the brave men and women who served our nation more than a generation ago,” said Paul Herbert, executive director, Cantigny First Division Foundation. “Their sacrifices helped free us from the terrible dangers of that time and shaped the world we live in today. We want them to know that their legacy will not be forgotten.”

All veterans and especially those who served in World War II will be honored on June 6. Already more than 150 World War II veterans have registered to attend, many of whom experienced combat on D-Day—the Allied invasion of France on June 6, 1944. World War II veterans who wish to visit Cantigny but are not yet registered should contact Steven Hawkins at 630 260 8130.

Also on June 6, the First Division Museum will formally dedicate a rare World War II Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP). Also known as a “Higgins boat” after its designer, Andrew Higgins, Cantigny’s LCVP is the same type used to deliver soldiers onto the beach in Normandy on D-Day in 1944. About 22,000 LCVPs were manufactured during World War II but only a dozen or fewer still exist.

“The LCVP is an icon from perhaps the most important moment in the 1st Infantry Division’s 90-year history,” said Keith Gill, director of the First Division Museum. “We’re thrilled to have such a rare and meaningful artifact to share with our visitors. There’s no substitute for seeing and touching the real thing.”

The vessel to be dedicated was acquired by the First Division Museum in 2008 and meticulously restored by the North Carolina Maritime Museum. It arrived at Cantigny in April and will be on public display June 6 through June 21.

The LCVP dedication will follow a memorial ceremony in the First Division Museum courtyard for veterans and their guests at 10 am on June 6. D-Day veterans will assist with the unveiling and be among the first to view and board the landing craft.

Active-duty 1st Infantry Division soldiers from Fort Riley, Kansas, will participate in the June 6 events. The soldiers will arrive aboard four different military helicopters—the most ever to land at Cantigny for a single event. Park visitors can meet the troops and see the aircraft up close. Historic vehicles from the First Division Museum’s collection will be displayed as well.

Between noon and 3 pm, visitors to the Robert R. McCormick Museum will encounter actor Richard Henzel portraying Colonel McCormick as he presents the D-Day address the Colonel broadcast over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System on June 10, 1944. Performances will be in Freedom Hall, Colonel McCormick's showplace library space in his historic home.

D-Day themed activities for all ages will take place throughout the day. At 3 pm, the Aurora American Legion Band will perform patriotic music in front of the First Division Museum. Further event details are posted online at dday65.org.

Honor Flight Chicago, a non-profit organization that pays tribute to local World War II veterans by arranging for them to visit the WWII memorial in Washington, D.C., will host a reunion at Cantigny as part of the June 6 events. Veterans who have traveled on an Honor Flight will be able to reunite with their comrades, and information about future Honor Flights will be available for veterans and their families. For more information, visit HonorFlightChicago.org.

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About the Cantigny First Division Foundation

The Cantigny First Division Foundation (CFDF) promotes public learning about America's military heritage and affairs through the history of the Big Red One—the famed 1st Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. It also chronicles and preserves the 1st Division's illustrious history, and conducts public outreach through the Cantigny First Division Museum, Robert R. McCormick Research Center and the Cantigny Military History Series. CFDF is part of the McCormick Foundation and located on the grounds of Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois, the home of the late Col. Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune* and a veteran of the First Division in World War I. For more information, please visit FirstDivisionMuseum.org.

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