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BY JENNIFER
DAILY NEWS

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MELISSA MCGUIRE | DAILY NEWS

Bob Gancarz watches as Leonard Tomaszewski pours a mixture of sand from a WWII invasion site at the base of a flagpole installed Wednesday at the veterans memorial that is being built in front of the Mason County Courthouse.

Sands of WWII

Veterans mix sand from Omaha Beach, Utah Beach at new memorial

BY MELISSA MCGUIRE
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Leonard Tomaszewski, a U.S. Army veteran of WWII, poured a mix of sand from Omaha Beach and Utah Beach in Normandy, France, at the base of a new flagpole in Ludington Wednesday.

It was a special moment for the 96-year-old as he took part in the place-

ment of the flagpole at a new veterans memorial at the Mason County Courthouse.

Tomaszewski was in England and traveled by boat across the English Channel for the Normandy invasion of Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, which is now remembered as D-Day.

"We were supposed to be there on June 5, but we didn't make it (until a day later) because the water was too rough," said Tomaszewski. "I had never seen so many boats on the water."

"This is great," Tomaszewski said of being able to tie in the past with the present with the placement of sand. "I

'I am glad to still be here today.'

Leonard Tomaszewski
WWII veteran

"I am glad to still be here today."

As he recalled D-Day, the ships made sort of a wall to make it easier for them to get through the water and they landed near the beach. He said he had two

SEE SANDS OF WWII, A7



Project Chairman Bob Gancarz helps Tim Corner from West Michigan Flag Poles install a pole at the veterans memorial being built by the Mason County Allied Veterans Council at the Mason County Courthouse. The memorial will have a blue star in the center, and plaques representing each branch of the military with names of approximately 185 fallen veterans from the community.

SANDS OF WWII: Sand brought back from D-Day anniversary

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cases of ammunition on his shoulders and some guns and jumped into water over his head to head toward the beach.

After the battle, Tomaszewski and the rest of his unit moved what he said was about 90 miles a day through Luxembourg and Belgium, where a bomb hit near them.

"I remember being covered in mud and rock," said Tomaszewski. "It was a V2 bomb that hit near us. We lost all of our equipment and two boys. The hole it made could have fit two houses in it. I was lucky."

Once in Germany, Tomaszewski was sent home after hearing he and his unit wouldn't have to be in the Battle of the Bulge. A trip home from France took them 10 days because of rough waters again.

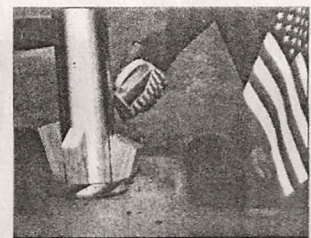
"I saw the Statue of Liberty and thought 'OK, we're home,'" said Tomaszewski.

The sand for Wednesday's flagpole placement came from veterans memorial project Chairman Bob Gancarz who said he and wife, Deanne, brought the sand back from France in 2004 during the 60th anniversary of the Normandy invasion.

Gancarz said there is also some of the sand from France at the base of



the flagpole at a memorial at St. John Cantius Church in Free Soil and there is some on display at the American Legion.



Leonard Tomaszewski pours the sand mixture into the base of the flagpole.

Tomaszewski, 96, of Ludington holds a cup filled with a sand mixture from Omaha and Utah beaches in Normandy, France. Tomaszewski served in the U.S. Army in WWII and was on Omaha Beach the day of the invasion, D-Day.

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The new memorial is being put in place by the Mason County Allied Veterans Council.

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