

D-Day, a storyteller and two men

By Connie V. Scott

EVANSTON – The Uinta County Museum welcomed Mr. Shelly Horne as their guest speaker at the final Brown Bag Lunch series on Thursday afternoon.

“I’m not an educated historian,” said Horne. “So, what am I? I guess you could say I’m a storyteller.”

Horne said he became interested in the history of World War II (WWII), because he remembers the gold stars on the windows of those who grieved loss.

As part of the Silent Generation (those born from 1930-1940), he remembers the effects of WWII, the Depression and rationing coupons.

“The Greatest Generation is all but gone,” said Horne. “Who will remember them?”

Horne said he could spend hours discussing D-Day and World War II, but wanted to focus his attention on two men from Uinta County, who did not know one another, but heroically served their nation at the invasion of Normandy.

“This is a story of two men from Uinta County,” he said. “They never met, but were serving in WWII on the beaches of Normandy. One returned home and one did not.”

During Horne’s presentation, he shared information on the January 6, 1944, invasion of Normandy, France.

He said over 7000 ships and landing crafts, carrying 156,000 allied troops were dispatched to five beaches on D-Day. Less than one week later those same beaches would see over one million soldiers arrive.

“It was an enormous undertaking with large forces,” he said. “Many things went wrong do to the large scale of the invasion. One man died – One man survived.”

The first man Horne spoke of was Raymond “Scrub” Dahlman from Evanston. Dahlman, a sheep hand and cowboy, enlisted at the age of 28.

“Scrub would have been 103 years old today,” said Horne. “He was the assistant driver in a five man tank crew of the 741st Tank Battalion.”

According to Horne, Scrub’s 741st battalion was to be the first wave to land on the Normandy shores.

Thirty-two Daffy Duck Sherman tanks, given their name because they could float, were to leave the ship 1000 yards off the shore; however, they were sent out nearly three miles off the beaches.

These DD tanks only traveled 4MPH, and of the 29 dispatched in the first wave, 27 did not make it to shore.

“As one tank sank, another tank launched,” said Horne. “Dahlman’s tank is at the bottom of the Normandy coast.”

Horne said he learned of Scrub while visiting Normandy several years ago. Throughout the years, he has had the opportunity to meet the surviving men of the 741st Division.

“Today, they are all gone,” he said. “And, Scrub is only one of three men still MIA from D-Day.”

Horne shared a quote about the true heroes being those who didn’t come home, but said he agreed and disagreed with the statement. He said every man who served in WWII was a hero.

One man didn’t return and one man did.

“Howard Woody is now 94 years old and lives in the valley. He is the president of Union Wireless, a company his father started.” said Horne. “Woody said the war was terrible and he’s spent over 70 years trying to forget it.”

According to Horne, Woody enlisted because of a promise Roosevelt made, saying if men enlisted now they would only have to serve one year. Woody said Roosevelt didn’t keep his promise.

Woody’s troop was set to land on Utah Beach, but due to weather ended up between Utah and Omaha Beach.

Horne said Woody shared how eerily quiet and cold that day was. The soldiers hunkered down to stay warm and Woody couldn’t remember what his thoughts that day.

At the time, this area was not heavily guarded by German troops. Horne said Woody and a buddy saw a single German soldier walking the banks, cold and not paying attention to what was going on.

“His buddy yelled out – Shoot him Howard, but Howard couldn’t and told his buddy to shoot him,” said Horne. “With tears in his eyes, Woody’s buddy couldn’t shoot either.”

Chaos quickly ensued and Woody’s troop found themselves behind German lines without proper supplies or maps.

“For several hours they wondered behind enemy lines, until they finally met up with friendlies,” said Horne. “It was the longest day of their lives. One survived – One did not.”

In April 1945, Woody helped liberate the Nordhausen Concentration Camp. His duty was to bury the dead.

According to statistics on Remember.org, some 60,000 people passed through that camp, and 13,000 to 18,000 died (remember.org/nordhausen).

“Woody said the concentration camp was haunting,” said Horne. “Bodies were stacked like wood. The sight and smell was unbelievable.”

Woody was wounded twice during his service in WWII, but never received a Purple Heart.

As Horne ended his presentation, he stated more men from Uinta County per capita served in WWII than in any other county in the United States.

“The Invasion of Normandy was a tremendous undertaking,” said Horne. “It was the bravery and fight in those soldiers who made the difference.”