



Eunice Smith Home Resident Has Vivid D-Day Memories

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ALTON, IL -- For Jack Weller, 70 years aren't too many not to remember seeing



parachutes in the

trees or cattle upside down for as far as the eye can see.

Weller, 98, is a resident of Eunice Smith Nursing Home on the Alton Memorial Hospital campus. The Jerseyville native is the area's oldest living Eagle Scout, but even more importantly was part of the D-Day invasion of France by Allied troops on June 6, 1944. He earned a Bronze Star and Purple Heart after shrapnel injured him.

“I almost got killed three times,” Weller said. “I was in a squad with 12 men, and maybe three or four of us survived that day.”

Weller said it took about 15 minutes to scale the cliffs of Omaha Beach.

“That was after a German sub attacked us,” he said. “We dropped barrels of dynamite and that was the last we heard of that sub. As we scaled the cliffs, I remember seeing the men of the 82nd Airborne coming down in parachutes. Those parachutes were in the trees everywhere. And then when we got to the top of the cliffs, you could look out over the land and we saw cattle upside down up and down all the roads.”

Weller said he and some men dug a foxhole by a large tree, and when the German troops zeroed in on them they just “dug a little deeper.”

“I was young and a happy-go-lucky guy,” Weller said. “But an experience like that teaches you how to pray. I really was scared the whole time. But you did what you needed to do.”

Weller came home in March 1945 and worked in a variety of businesses, including all 10 of the A&P grocery stores in the area, Shell Refinery and he even had his own car wash business. His son, Dr. Gordon Weller, is a podiatrist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Photo Caption: Jack Weller, a resident of Eunice Smith Home and a D-Day veteran, with Susan Tomlin of the ESH staff.