

Jeff Around Town – June 17th, 2025

Jeff: That music you hear is from George Gershwin's "*An American in Paris*". It's the intro music I always use for Jeff Around Town. If you listen to Jeff Around Town regularly, then you know I love to celebrate the people and places in our area who are doing interesting and creative things.

Those who are an inspiration in our community and beyond. Well, recently I found myself in Paris with nearly 30 others from the Omaha area, and not only in Paris, but in Normandy, France. We were there as part of a French conversation group I was honored to co-lead.

It was on June 6th, the 81st anniversary of D-Day, when we attended a memorial ceremony at Utah Beach and also spent time on Omaha Beach. It was my first time there at Omaha Beach. Omaha's sister city in France, our Ville Jumelle, in French, that's your sister city, indeed is the Omaha Beach area.

Technically, it's a cluster of several dozen villages that make up the Isigny Omaha intercom and includes Omaha Beach. Now, if you're a member of Sister Cities or Alliance France has Omaha, then it's likely you know about our sister city in France. And if you've been to Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery, then you also know how truly powerful and poignant it is to step onto that sand and to look out at the English Channel, imagining what must have been in the hearts and minds of those brave souls as they came to shore, all in the name of freedom and liberation.

On this particular D-Day, the air was cool. The clouds hung low with a drizzle. But to pass through the villages in and around Omaha Beach on a rainy afternoon, to see small children dressed as American soldiers, to breathe in the sight of French flags and American flags waving equally from homes and businesses, the reds, the whites, the blues. Dreariness with splashes of hopeful color, those of us, 30 Omahans, alongside thousands of others, on this sacred ground, to soak up, to deeply take in the enormous task those brave souls undertook 81 years before, to now walk quietly alongside other humans from around the world.

If you know anything about me, then you know I love to make connections, not just with others, but across time and distances. And in that moment, I did indeed feel that deep connection. If you haven't been and should ever have the chance to visit Omaha Beach, I can't recommend it enough.

But if you can't, know that you have a sister there, a sister city that connects us, not only in name, but in spirit. There, in Normandy, France, is an Omaha where people from everywhere come to celebrate freedom. And that's another Jeff Around Town.