

# Stephen Ambrose

## HISTORICAL TOURS



AN ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

FALL 2002



Stephen E. Ambrose  
1936-2002

My dear friend and mentor Steve Ambrose died, and I was not there. I had held his hand just days before and told him that I loved him and would see him in two weeks. Somehow, I knew I would not, and the phone rang for me days later in Normandy to tell me I was right. The football was in my throat as I announced the sad news to my fellow travelers on Stephen's "D-Day to the Rhine Tour."

The following morning, standing in the cemetery at Omaha Beach, I requested that "Taps" be played. The notes streamed over the field of white crosses. We stood at attention and wept, and visitors who learned for whom the bugle blew came to me with condolences.

Steve Ambrose was buried and I wasn't there, but I was walking the fields that we had walked together learning the wonderful story of June 6, 1944. And I told the story that he told to me, and realized perhaps that's where I should have been. I know, for certain, that's where he would have wanted me to be.

Stephen Ambrose lives on in my heart, and in the hearts of millions of his fans.

More importantly, his stories and history will live forever, as long as there is an America.

I know that pleases him. God bless Stephen Ambrose, and God bless America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ronald Drez".

Ronald Drez

## 2002 In Review



**W**e did not know what to expect this year, but in the end, I salute our many customers who continued to travel with us. It has been a year of memorable tours, and our company has continued to grow because of it. We are looking forward to similar success in the future. In the next two years, Americans will commemorate some very important historic anniversaries. 2003 is the bicentennial anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase and the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. We have scheduled two dates for our tour commemorating the Corps of Discovery.

The Opening of the Pacific Wing of the National D-Day Museum was a joyous affair complete with a ticker tape parade, speeches from the assembled dignitaries and conversations with veterans. *Price for Peace*, the Museum's much awaited film on the Pacific Theater aired at the elegant Saenger Theater before a black tie crowd. The film pre-

miere was followed by an evening reception at the Museum. *Price for Peace* is an engrossing and captivating presentation of the war in the Pacific, with real footage and scores of appearances by the men and women who were there. The exhibit itself stole the entire show. It presents every aspect of the war in the Pacific, with maps, charts, audio and visual displays that all but transport you there. Together the film and the new exhibit capture a major dimension of the titanic struggle waged by the Americans who fought in the Pacific. Both are part of the Museum's permanent collection. The exhibit is open to the public and the film is screened many times daily.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yakir Katz'.

– **Yakir Katz**  
Director of Operations

## D-DAY 60th Anniversary Celebration

Cruise the English Channel with the National D-Day Museum and Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of D-Day. Together with the National D-Day Museum and Peter McLean, Ltd., Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours has chartered a cruise ship to sail from Tilbury, England to Caen, France to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of June 6, 1944. We are scheduling first-rate speakers and wonderful events for this historic occasion.



The National D-Day  
Museum

# 1<sup>ST</sup> BAND OF BROTHERS COMMEMORATIVE TOUR

This past September, 48 intrepid souls joined historian Jake Powers, Band of Brothers veterans William Guarnere and Edward Heffron, and myself for an amazing adventure on the very first Band of Brothers Commemorative Tour. Beginning in Toccoa, Ga., the group followed in the footsteps of E/506, the company made famous in Stephen E. Ambrose's book, *Band of Brothers* and the HBO miniseries of the same name. For 15 days we followed Easy Company from the unit's training camp in Toccoa to the site of their final triumphs at Berchtesgaden, Germany and Zell am See, Austria.

Throughout the trip, local citizens went out of their way to welcome the group and to thank the two veterans for their part in the liberation of Europe. Among the many unforgettable moments of the trip were the authentically uniformed reenactors who greeted the bus when it arrived in Aldbourne, England, and the guided tour they gave us of the village; the C-47 flight to France; and Guarnere standing in St. Mere Eglise on the exact spot where he had landed 58 years earlier describing the first evening of the invasion of Europe.

Holland proved to be just as enjoyable as France. Our connection to the past became very real when, at the 101st's landing zones outside of Son, we were able to find the remains of one of the

gliders that crashed during the opening phases of Operation Market Garden. Everyone on the trip was able to leave with pieces of glider skin taken from the ground where it had rested since 1944. After checking in to our hotel in Eindhoven we enjoyed the city's annual liberation day festivities. Following the parade, the group was able to mingle with the many American, British and Dutch veterans who had come for the celebration before enjoying the city.

Our visit to the Arnhem area the next day was made even more poignant by our chance encounter with a group of British Airborne veterans who were back to visit the site of their battle for the final

bridge over the Rhine. The "Red Devils" were very gracious in sharing some of their experiences with the group and explaining what had happened at the bridge. Following our tour of Easy's Dutch battlefields we traveled to Maagraten cemetery to pay our respects to the 8,302 American soldiers buried there, including

those from Easy Company.

From Holland it was on to Bastogne, Belgium, where we had a chance to explore the company's foxholes in the Bois Jacques and to see a special exhibition at the Mardasson museum that included Richard Winters' and Forrest Guth's original wartime uniforms. One of the trip's most special moments came at Rachamps where, following the dedication of a plaque to the men of E Company, the group was entertained by the choir performing



*Continued on next page*

*Band of Brothers continued...*

the same songs they had sung to the men of Easy in January 1945. It was the first time that these songs had been sung in the church since the war. Following the concert, the veterans and tour participants were guests of the village for a wonderful reception.

We then continued on into eastern France and Germany, stopping at a preserved Maginot Line fortification, the site of the company's last combat patrol in Hagenau and then on to the concentration camp at Dachau, where the memorial sites director gave us a private tour. Our final days were spent in

Berchtesgaden and Zell am See. Our visit to Berchtesgaden featured many firsts, including a private tour of the summer chancellery building and a visit to portions of the bunker complex closed to the public since the withdrawal of American forces in the 1990s. Unfortunately, an unexpected snowstorm prevented us from having our final dinner at the Eagle's Nest. Undaunted, after a day touring in nearby Salzburg, the group held its last dinner at its hotel in Bad Reichenall.

It was a wonderful trip and I want to thank each and every one of the tour participants for



being a part of the inaugural Band of Brothers Commemorative Tour. While there were many memorable firsts on this trip, I am sure that subsequent tours will hold many enjoyable surprises of their own.

– **Christopher Anderson**  
Editor, *World War II Magazine*

## CORPS OF DISCOVERY TOUR

Last summer, I accompanied seven high school students from Los Angeles' Windward School on the July 11-21 Corps of Discovery Tour. In planning the trip, we hoped to get away from the city, see the open skies, breathe the smog-free air, and learn about American history experientially.

Wherever we were, whether canoeing to Judith's Landing, riding horseback over the Bitterroot Mountains, camping during a lightning storm, or just stopping off in a small Montana town to grab a sandwich, we found Lewis and Clark. We found them not in the tourist spots or in places marked "official," but in the camaraderie of

the group and in the journey itself. Captain Ron Drez sparked our minds with passages from *Undaunted Courage* and DeVoto's *Lewis and Clark Journals*.

While teenagers and adults alike discussed the eccentricities of Meriwether Lewis or the challenges of the prickly pear covered trail that tormented the Corps of Discovery years ago, they also talked about their own families, politics, and passions for America. What we found was more than a break from our daily lives. It was an opportunity to investigate, intimately and academically, the path of Lewis



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and Clark and the men, woman, child, and dog that made up that journey. We discovered the spirit of adventure that binds us together as Americans, and we are all grateful for having had the chance to participate in this tradition of "rediscovery."

– **Jeff Martin**

# RON DREZ *on the* ITALIAN CAMPAIGN TOUR

We kicked off our inaugural Italian Campaign in April of this year. It was delightful to see so many familiar faces in the group of those who had previously traveled with us.

Everyone met in Rome and we motored down to Paestum (near Salerno) to begin tracing the



path of Mark Clark's 5<sup>th</sup> Army. We stood on the Salerno Beaches and could see Mount Soprano. We visited the memorial dedicated to the 36<sup>th</sup> Division that fought to land there.

Then we were off following the coast to the town of Maiori where the Rangers landed and scaled the heights to the Chiunzi Pass. It was breathtaking to go through the Pass and suddenly



see Mount Vesuvius in the clouds and the city of Naples far below. Our evening stay at our beautiful hotel in Sorrento along the Amalfi Coast was a special treat overlooking the blue-green waters of the Mediterranean.

The following day everyone had a free day to choose a side trip to either Pompeii or the Isle of Capri. We split almost evenly. Judy and I went to Capri, but all reported wonderful experiences at either place.

Off again toward Cassino along the ancient Appian Way, crossing the Volturno River and through the Mignano Pass. Those breathtaking mountains, which came into view, were the deadly heights of Monte Lungo, San Pietro, and Monte Cassino defended by Field Marshall Kesselring's excellent troops in 1944.

Our wonderful driver, Heije, managed to get the bus up the mountain to follow along the old tank track approaching San Pietro. We reenacted the battle along the way and visited the old battle-destroyed ruins.



The Abbey of Monte Cassino was our stop the following morning and then the Rapido River where the Texans of the 36<sup>th</sup> Division fought a bloody battle. As luck would have it, we ran into an elderly gentleman who was the police chief of Monte Lungo during the war, and we persuaded him to regale us with his experiences under German occupation. He spoke not a word of English but had an excellent translator.

From there, we went to Anzio and visited the American Cemetery and followed the Ranger's attack to Cisterna. The conclusion of our trip was four wonderful days in Rome and Florence.

Judy and I and everyone at Stephen Ambrose Tours hope that you will join us on this historic and beautiful trip in the future.

## TESTIMONIAL

### THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN TOUR 2002

Once again, Ron Drez led a most interesting and informative tour. He really knows his history. Although Italy has very few war memorials, there was enough of the Italian Campaign to enlighten our limited knowledge of the war in Italy. The hotels were first rate. The food was fantastic and our time for sightseeing also was a benefit. With Ron leading the tour, the trip was well worth it.

Yours Truly,

*Harold P. Jaffe*

Harold P. Jaffe  
Tour Participant

## CONTACT US

Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours  
1515 S. Salcedo Street  
New Orleans, LA 70125  
Toll Free: (888) 903-3329  
Phone: (504) 821-9283  
Fax: (504) 821-6460  
[www.stephenambrosetours.com](http://www.stephenambrosetours.com)  
[info@stephenambrosetours.com](mailto:info@stephenambrosetours.com)

## 2003 Tours

*Civil War Tour*  
April 3-9, 2003

*Italian Campaign*  
April 12-23, 2003

*D-Day to the Rhine Tour*  
April 26-May 8, 2003  
June 1-13, 2003  
September 1-13, 2003  
October 7-19, 2003

*Band of Brothers  
Commemorative Tour*  
May 16-30, 2003  
September 12-26, 2003

*Corps of Discovery*  
July 8-18, 2003  
August 9-19 2003

## Interested in a Customized Group Tour?

The past few years have seen Stephen Ambrose Historical Tours broaden our horizons from our annually scheduled adult tours. We have branched out into the fields of educational tours for high school students, private family tours, and military reunions. We have greatly enjoyed putting our expertise to the test to explore sites relevant to these itineraries that our larger tours do not visit.

If you are interested in custom designing a historical tour, please contact us by phone at **(888) 903-3329**, or by e-mail at [info@stephenambrosetours.com](mailto:info@stephenambrosetours.com). We would be delighted to address your travel needs.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer-Lynn Jennings,  
Operations Manager



1515 S. Salcedo Street  
New Orleans, LA 70125