

May 9, 1994

Mr. Brian Lamb  
C-Span  
400 N. Capitol St., NW  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Lamb:

I watched all of your Saturday program anticipating the 50th Anniversary of D-Day, and much of the Sunday broadcast. I did not join in the "call-in" activity to which you invited veterans of WW II to share their experiences. While I was not present at D-Day-

so I did not feel alien to those veterans of the landing who did call in and express themselves.

I did, however, react very differently than many of your callers, and all three of your Saturday panelists to the question which, to be frank, I thought you were pressing a little harder than was wholly appropriate. You kept asking them how they would "react" to the presence of President Clinton at Utah and Omaha Beaches next month, and a great majority of those responding expressed in more or less subdued tones, the theme of Clinton-hatred that seems unfortunately to characterize so many of your call-in shows.

I think it may be useful to let you know, at least, that there are combat veterans who fought willingly against our nation's enemies in World War II who do not share the view that Bill Clinton is in any way less entitled to represent America at that beach than, for example, Ronald Reagan was entitled to pose at Point du Hoc in 1984. I am far prouder to have Bill Clinton stand up for me at Omaha than to have had Ronald Reagan decorating SS graves in my name at Bitburg.

Nor does this veteran share the view that never before have we had Americans object when their country was at war. Do they believe that Lincoln, who fought vigorously in Congress against the continuation of the Mexican War, was somehow unfit to lead the Republic in the subsequent Civil War? Do they condemn as unpatriotic the many Americans who thought the wars of their own times--the Indian Wars of the 70's and the Spanish-American War did not exactly represent America at its best? Do they remember the hundreds of thousands of Americas in the 1940's--mostly comfortable, conservative, right-wing Americans who hated Franklin Delano Roosevelt as frenetically as their spiritual grandchildren hate Bill Clinton? And do they castigate the memory of the Confederates who fought bravely against their country in the thoroughly evil cause of defending slavery?

As John Keegan pointed out in his important interview on Sunday, the fight against Hitler was a struggle against the most egregiously wicked figure of this wickedness-filled century, while Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, as thoroughly nasty as they were, did not threaten the world in anything like the same manner.



Finally, I emphatically disassociate myself from the Saturday panelist who said, as some of your callers implied later, that "young people today" and especially the "young people of the 60's" were somehow morally inferior to the young men who went to Europe and the Pacific in the 40's. I observed the young people of the mid-60's who risked a good deal, including in some cases, physical injury and death, to try to rid the nation of a scourge which threatened its meaning almost as deeply as Hitler had threatened its existence. I refer to legalized racial segregation and discrimination. I thought at the time, and I think today that the Freedom Riders and the voter registration workers of the 60's were as entitled to the nation's love and respect for their bravery and their true patriotism as were the soldiers of my generation. And "young people today" to use the despairing characterization nostalgic conservatives have used for centuries, are just as likely to leave an imprint for good on their country as we did--maybe more so. My own observations, in my seven decades of life, lead me to believe that every generation of Americans rises to meet the real challenges confronting its country. As a veteran, not only of the war, but of the half-century that has followed, I will be proud to have President Clinton represent his country and mine next month at Omaha.

If there were--and I don't really think there is--a generation of Americans whose dedication to their country's needs could be criticized, it could be those right-wingers of the 70's and 80's and 90's who measure their love of country by how little the country demands of them--who cheered at the "restoration of patriotism" they felt in the Reagan years in precise unison with the diminution of their tax bills.

I do not write this to deny to those who dislike the President the right to say so. I just hope they do not permit themselves to believe they speak for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the letter.

Rockville, MD 20852

P.S. On a wholly different level, let me help you get straight on the question of who landed where. The 101st and 82 US Airborne Divisions landed in the Cotentin peninsula, just west of the beaches. The 4th US Infantry Division landed at Utah Beach. The 1st and 29th US Infantry Divisions landed at Omaha. The British 50th Division landed on Gold Beach, the Canadian 3rd Division on Juno and the British 3rd Division on Sword Beach. The British 6th Airborne (and a company of Canadian paratroopers) landed in the Orne River airhead at the east end of the beaches. French commandoes, and British and American specialized units, Norwegian sailors, Polish and New Zealand airmen also struggled in those first 24 hrs on which so much depended. It was a thoroughly multinational operation, under which, to bring up another frequent complaint of the right wing, American men fought, bravely and effectively under foreign command.