

**Press Release for "Full Victory," the D-Day Commemorative Painting**

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Presentation of an Original Color Print made to the Eisenhower National Historic Site in Gettysburg, PA.



**"FULL VICTORY"**

*General Eisenhower visits the 101st Airborne on the eve of D-Day*  
65th Anniversary WWII Victory Edition

A beautifully framed museum-quality copy of an original painting of the famous photograph of the General Dwight D. Eisenhower speaking with the paratroopers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division on the eve of the Normandy Invasion in June 1944 was presented to the Eisenhower National Historic Site in Gettysburg, PA. by Minnesota artist Julie Wildgen and author Leonard Kloeber. They collaborated to create the first known color rendering of the vintage World War II black and white photo and also organized America's Vets, a nonprofit corporation, to support veterans' memorials and service groups through the sale of prints.

June 6, 2010 marks the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied invasion of France which is now known as D-Day when Eisenhower commanded all of the Allied Forces. The Eisenhower National Historic Site is the home and farm of President Eisenhower. Located adjacent to the Gettysburg Battlefield, the farm served the President as a weekend retreat and a meeting place for world leaders.

***About the Project:***

Author Leonard Kloeber, Jr. is a retired Army Colonel with over thirty years of active and reserve service. After retiring from both the military and his civilian job, he wrote the book, *Victory Principles, Leadership Lessons from D-Day*, which describes the historical events leading to D-Day and seven universal leadership lessons illustrated by the D-Day story. While promoting his book, he met the artist, Julie Wildgen, at a bookstore where she was regularly painting. Kloeber asked her if she would consider painting a copy of the now famous WWII photograph so that they could use it to raise funds to support veterans' memorials and groups. Wildgen was completing the project that she was working on at the time, and after several weeks, agreed to join the project. Now after almost one year of work and over 700 hours, the painting is completed.

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Since the original photo is not only in black and white, but also slightly distorted, they began with research to accurately portray the details. Kloeber obtained an original copy of the photo from the US National Archives, and also did research on the uniforms and equipment. With an artist's eye, Wildgen asked many questions about the details which she tried to incorporate into the painting. Both have been concerned about keeping this version as true as possible to the original photograph and the historical event itself.

Wildgen and Kloeber are partnering with several veterans' groups including the US War Memorials Overseas which provides for the care of monuments and grave sites that are not maintained by the US government. Through America's Vets, they will be selling print copies of the painting to raise money to support these partner groups. The artist and the author are donating their time to maximize the proceeds available for support.

### ***The Story Behind the Painting:***

General Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of all Allied forces that launched the largest amphibious assault in history on the northern coast of France. They ultimately defeated the Nazi war



machine by opening the Western Front in Europe during WWII. The young paratroopers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division played a significant role by jumping behind the beaches to disrupt the German defenses and secure key terrain for the assault troops landing on the beaches. General Eisenhower made a difficult decision to authorize the airborne assault even though intelligence estimates predicted significant casualties. The courage of the paratroopers is emblematic of the selfless service of all veterans who have served our nation. This painting also commemorates the life-time service of Dwight D. Eisenhower who was promoted to the rank of five-star General as the Supreme Commander and then elected as the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United

States. This famous photograph and now the painting capture that important moment in history.

The painting will now be featured at both local and national events to support veterans' memorials and service groups where copies may be purchased by those who wish to support the project.

### ***About the Artist:***

Julie Wildgen is a self-taught artist who has been painting more than five years. Her work has been featured locally in the Twin Cities. She is honored to be a part of this project, especially since her father was a veteran of WWII. She and her family live in Burnsville, Minnesota.

### ***About the Author:***

Leonard Kloeber is a West Point graduate and retired officer who served with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne on active duty. His family also has a history of military service. Both his father and father-in-law served in WWII. Kloeber's father-in-law, 1Lt. John Garvik from St. Paul, MN, landed on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France on D-Day and was killed-in-action. He is buried at the Normandy American Cemetery. Kloeber's brother-in-law served in Vietnam, and his son-in-law served in Iraq with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. He is now a consultant, and lives with his wife in Prior Lake, Minnesota.