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Filmmakers' D-Day documentary to be shown nationwide on PBS.

A project that began as a keepsake for a group of World War II veteran paratroopers has turned into a full-length documentary that will be broadcast across the United States and France in time for the 60th anniversary of D-Day.

D-Day: Down to Earth – Return of the 507th, will debut June 2, at 8 p.m. EDT on PBS. Check TV listings for local air times. It will also be shown in France on the Odyssee Channel May 28.

The documentary is the first PBS program for co-producers Phil Walker and David Druckenmiller. In 2002, Druckenmiller was asked to accompany a group of World War II veterans to Normandy to document the unveiling of a D-Day memorial in their honor. Upon his return, Druckenmiller asked Walker to help him develop a short program for the veterans and their families that captured the essence of the regiment's return to Normandy. "Being there on the ground in France with the veterans, at the places where they fought, hearing them tell their stories was a remarkable experience. The trip changed my views on veterans, the war, and this generation. I felt it was a story that needed to be told" Druckenmiller said.

As the two began work on the project, the film quickly evolved into a longer piece with the potential for reaching a broader audience. "When we got into the heart of the 507th's history, we realized we had something unique – a D-Day story that had taken 60 years to complete," Walker said. The two ended up with a 47-minute documentary that connects the regiment's contribution in the war with their present-day journey back to Normandy.

In April of 2003, the filmmakers shopped the project to cable and broadcast television outlets including PBS who expressed great interest. "Public Television felt like the most natural venue for this film. PBS was very supportive, encouraging us to add more personal insights from veterans to flesh out the various stories in the film", Walker said.

Druckenmiller and Walker interviewed a total of 22 veterans of the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment from all over the United States. The end result is a 57-minute film that details the paratroopers' story from training, to combat in Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge, through post-war disbandment, and their remarkable reunion nearly 60 years later.

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