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I received my latest copy of the AMPHIBIAN recently and as always it was trip back into the time zone once again for me. And YES it is our legacy to tell what it was about back then. So I am going to give it a try and lest see how it comes out.

This story is how I came to CJG back in 1944, and where I ended up. It is a typical US Army trip for me. I was first inducted in the service back in 1943, very early in March. A bunch of us were scheduled to go in just before Christmas time of 1942, but for some unknown reason, like every thing else, they held off on us till late February of 1943. So when that day and time came, we were told to get up early and go down town and meet in front of City Hall square in Fall River, Mass. I recall my parents and every one else that was to go that day coming in by trolley car. We had no car in my family, so most of us did come by trolley car to City Hall. Well that is when we saw how the US Army operates. Go over, go over there, stay still until your name is called out. Then slowly we all got together and when they were satisfied the band started to play and my cousin looked at me and said, well I guess we are in the Army now!!!!!!p

So here we are, all teen age kids going off to war and not knowing where we would end up. They had us in a column of threes and what a ragged looking bunch we were. Has the band played, we all followed it down North Main street and down a steep hill, better known to us here as FRENCHS HILL and down to the train depot. And sure enough there was a train there waiting for us!!!!!!

And after a while we got called to standby and board the train as your name was called out. Well that was the introduction to the so called (HURRY UP AND WAIT'S Routine. We all got to know so well later on!!!!

It was some time later that we all got on the train and off it went, everybody was waving and crying and of course the band played till we got out of sight. It slowly made it's way up to Taunton, Mass, then to Attleboro, to Brockton and then Boston to the US Army base there. It stopped to take on more men and then made it's way up thru Concord, Mass and then to Ayre, Mass and destination to be Fort Devens, Mass. It was late in the afternoon and just about time for supper there. We finally all got off and walked down to the Mess Hall and every one had some thing to eat, then formed up and walked over to these dark barracks a single level type and covered with tar paper. There we stood for several days to get all our clothes, examinations, shots and what ever else they threw in on us.

I was truly ashamed to see all of us being examined in a place that they had us take all our clothes off and then slowly replace each one with military clothes and put our civilian clothes in a bag to be sent home or thrown out. This went on for four days and one day we got a full taste of Army life, we got the whistle and the bugle. This was the start of it all to be for four years of my Army life.

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This was for us to be replacements to the 1st and 2nd Armored that was now in Africa and to get ready for the landings in Sicily and Italy. After the process of us all we got orders to pack up and get on the trucks that will take us to the trains again for transportation to some unknown POE in the South. Well after several days on the troop train we ended up in New Orleans, La at a place called Camp Paulche on Lake Pontchartrain. This was a POE Camp for overseas duty and a camp for the Transportation corps.

When we got there, we got our assigned barracks and next day we were told that this is where you will train for such duty. Then a few days later we were told to get ready for another train ride for movement to another camp involving the Transportation corps. Well after several days of traveling again we ended up at Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida in Carabelle. There we unloaded and got assigned to our barracks and were told next day that we were to form the 358th Harbor Craft Co.

As I understand the duties of this unit, it was to help the US Navy in the harbor control work and unloading of the ships of equipment needed for the war, so the transportation companies would take all this unloaded equipment to a marshalling yard, then the material would then be picked up by the units coming on the troop transports. Some equipment was driveable, some in crates. We trained at the Camp Carabelle to do all this day and night, working at times with large spot lights and some time just with a flashlight with using different signals to the crane operator.

We were stationed at Camp Gordon Johnston and did training there also and at Camp Carabelle. I made the rank of T/5 while there??

Lot of us in that unit had different vocations and trades, so we were pretty well diversified in what we could do. Myself going back to my younger days, I played the piano, drums, trombone and was part of a drum and bugle corp back then. I took all the trade courses at school, so as to learn a trade and better myself later. Carpentry, electrical, metal working, painting, machine shop also.

I had to learn how to weld while at CGJ, a rush course of that and plumbing also. So when we all left CGJ, we were well trained in what we could do. After several months of this we got orders that we were going to move out to a Northern POE and that meant another train ride again. Then the day came we packed up and got on the train and up the coast, we came and ended up at Camp Myles Standish in Taunton, Mass.

We stayed there for four days and I was able to get a weekend pass to come home, as Camp Myles Standish was only about 15 to 20 miles from Fall River, Mass. I bummed a ride into Taunton and took the bus to the East side of the Brightman street bridge and got off and walked home from there. That took about 10 minutes to walk. I had some nice food while at home and then had to go back to camp. I took the bus from Fall River to Taunton and then bummed my way back to camp. Next day we got orders to get ready for a train ride to the Boston Army Base to board a ship to go overseas.

The ship was the USSC ship Wakefield it was operated by the USCG

and if you guys recall them, they were no good for nothing at all the rain would come down off your helmet and down your neck and into your body inside. NICE HEY!!!

Finally after this long miserable trip, we spotted land and we went in shore and off loaded. Well unknown to us it was Normandy Beach of the famous "D" Day landing. We moved out on shore and was told by the engineers where to walk up that hill, by the White cloth markers, and then very carefully move inland to a staging area a few miles up the road. We were told to pitch tents and make yourself comfortable, for it may be a while before we could move up the road. For several days we stood there and as usual made the best of things. No fires to dry off at all and lot of guys were getting real sick also. The cooks tried the best they could to make some kind of food for us. It was a real tough go for that time.

Then we got orders to pack up to move back down to the beach and get ready to board a LST, this time it was an American ship another mystery has to where we were going this time. So very carefully we worked our way down the hill again and onto the ship.

We had no equipment of any kind, just what we had was our duffle bag and no more. Once we all got on the LST we noticed it was being loaded with some lumber by captured German troops with American guards. After a very long time we pushed off the beach area and the set sail up the coast. Finally going into the area of Le Harve, France on a beach area. It some how the Captain of this LST got to close to the other LST already there and we scraped sides going in. Then we had to back out and come in again. Once ashore we were put on some trucks that were driven by the French forces to an area down by the piers and buildings.

These building were a shipyard and large repair buildings. We were put up into a building on the second floor and this building had holes in the roof from the aerial bombing. So it was not a pretty site to see or move into. We got orders to clean up the place and make it our quarters for operations. Some time later we were told to start to pick up some trucks and equipment. Now where did it all come from and how it got there was beyond me, but we got a few 3/4 tons, one ton and half and several two and half ton GMC's and one JEEP. That was to be it for a while.

It took about a week or so to get organized and to start our work in the whole area of the docks and piers. I was assigned to the motor pool section and we had a 3/4 ton Dodge weapons carrier to use. There was a lot of Military Police patrolling the whole place and at one time I had to make a quick trip down to the crane that was unloading a ship and they were having engine trouble with it. So several of us got in with tool boxes and I was driving at the time and we got stopped by the MP's and I was cited for speeding even though we tried to explain to them what we were going to do. NO MATTER. I got cited and had to appear at a court session for this and loss some of my pay and was restricted to quarters for a few days. It was called a Summary Court Martial I believe. And it was entered on my service records as such. And to top it all off, the guy who stopped me in his JEEP came from Boston and I told him I came from Fall River, Mass. But he would not have any of that so I had to pay the price for that day.

One time we needed a 2½ ton truck with a dump body so he and his helper saw one and got it off loaded and on to a flat bed and a fellow by the name of Charles Mason "Chick" we called him for dove of with it to our area and we unpacked it from the shipping case changed a few numbers and presto we had our 2½ ton GMC dump and many others to come also. So we had no shortage of trucks!!!!

There was a Ralph Cates from either South or North Carolina who was a driver in our unit. A Charles D. McInnis who came from Randolph Mass, and last I heard after the war moved up to Medford, Mass. I tried one day to make it up there in my old used 48 Plymouth that I bought but never made. I broke down coming up, so that was it.

Mac was on one of the ST's we had. The ST's are a small tug boats that were used to move barges and what ever around the harbor. Some guys trained on them at Camp Carabell. We also used some small boats for moving personnel and small equipment around where ever needed. So we operated on land, as well on the water to keep the harbor for use by the military. Everyday it was some thing different going on.

I do not know for sure when a lot of us left to go as replacement for the units we were going to be assigned to later. I know we left Le Harve and went to Rouen, France got on a train and it made it way ever so slowly to Paris, then on to a place called VILLA RUE in France. This was a tent city place with the 6 man tents set up. It was a very dismal place where I stayed for a week or so and then by truck to some troop train area and off I went again on the train to Worms, Germany and it was there that I was assigned to the 45th Infantry Division Company "D" of the 157th Infantry Regiment. I was assigned to the Motor Pool as a driver mechanic I do not recall the date of that part, but stayed with them until the war ended and were 20 miles outside of Munich at the time and headed for Innsbruck, Austria.

We pulled back and was sent to Augsburg, Germany and I stayed there until the division got orders to pack up and prepare to move to a Place called Reims, France. Once there all the equipment we brought with us was placed in a big field and all were checked out and then several days later the Free French Forces came and took it all leaving just a big empty field.

After staying at Reims for a week or so, we got on a train that took us to LeHarve and to a place called Camp Lucky Strike. It was a staging area to be for us and then to board a ship going back to the states. While there I made it my business to get out of the camp on a pass and make my way down to the area where the 358th was still stationed. Those guys were glad to see me and Frank Brodbeck came for me most every day and I ate good food for once. THEN it was time to say good bye to them and it was off on the trucks to board the ship which was the SS SEA OWL, a converted K4 Liberty to take troops home. Well they doubled the compliment and few days later off we went and that was the last I saw of them I knew of the 358th Harbor Craft. This was a very rough trip home well over 14 days and we had two meals a day while on her.

We finally pulled into Boston harbor unloaded and on the troop train for a ride to Fort Devens, Mass. There I stood at Devens

for a while. Some of us went to Camp Bowie, Texas. I for some reason stayed at Fort Devens for many months and helped take care of the German POW's there. I was assigned the detail to take them back and forth to the Mess Hall where they worked. On days off I was able to come home on pass until my time was up and was discharged from there late in 1946.

On my discharge paper, I see the date of departure to go overseas dated Oct 11, 1944, destination, ETO, date of arrival on 19 Oct 44. Date of departure from Europe (Unkown) date of arrival Sept 11, 1945. There is more to this, but I would have to get my personnel records to be exact. I joined the Massachusetts National Guard in 1948 and was assigned to Battery "D" 747th AAA Aw anti-aircraft 40mm guns, then they changed over to 90mm guns and I stayed with them until 1962, when I got out on a medical. The Korean was next for us to fight

I made full Master Sgt in the guard and made my way up to Battalion Motor Sgt. Lot of awards for my service while in the guard and I was able to play in the band at times. I played the drums, base drum and Sousa phone at times. Nice duty Right!

So, there it is for what it's worth!

Sincerely William T. Cote

William T. Cote

P.S. I sent Tony a full length picture of the 358th some time ago and you may have it there at the museum. The Captain in Charge was Capt Melvin Poer and vert tall man We had lots of 2nd and 1st Lt's also Junior and Seniro Warrant Officers Men I knew in the 358th were;
Frank Brodbeck of Columbus, Ohio Shaker Heights???
Ralph Cates of either South or North Carolina??
Charles Mason (CHICK) of Bridgeport, Conn.
Charles D. McInnis of Randolph, Mass now maybe of Medford, Mass.
Joe Soon the Mess Sgt of New York some place
Lots of others but I can not recall thier names some faces I can recall .
A fellow named Madden out of Florida ///

SORRY ABOUT THE MISTAKES I MADE IN THE TYPING some times the fingers are faster than the mind.

As I can recall the harbor of Le Havre, France was big and from I can recall it was bombed heavy at times, The Germans had it all ringed with the 88mm guns and more defenses were on the top of the city where the airport was. Our assignment was to try and get the place back some operational status. I do not know at this time if there were any other Harbor Craft Companies assigned there besides us. There were Port Battalions also and we worked together with them all the time. Leharve had ship building places repair places and dry docks of many kinds most were in bad shape as the French brought ships and other boats in there and closed the locks and sunk all of it. Close to where we were was the half finished super liner the SS PARIS which was the sister ship of the SS Normandie. It was scuttled and sunk and turned over on its side. There were many sunken boats and ships in the whole area and those had to be cleared away. That was a lot of work for us and other units to do before some ships could come in and unload.

Over on one side there was some sub pens and that was heavily fortified with 88's and the British took care of that area around there. That was off limits to us. I recall in one of the dry docks was a German "E" Boat, some thing like our PT Boats, it was tipped over and pretty well holed with shell holes and bullets. So you can see the 358th had its hands full all the while they were there. We had one liberty ship try to come into one of the cleared docks to unload, but for some unknown reason it hit some kind of an object and we heard a big explosion and she stopped dead in the water. She had lost power to her booms and winches for a while, till they got that back several days later meanwhile the port battalions some of their equipment along side and started to unload the ship. Lot of material floated loose from the hole in her side and that took days to do. It was patched up and sent back to England for repairs.

We all worked long days and nights there to get the place operational again. Our mess hall took a lot of work to get going again, we improvised a lot so we could get hot food at meal times. I can remember our cook, his name was Joe Soon and came from New York we had a lot of different men doing the cooking for us, but we made do until they could get going.

Nobody had days off for a long time, the whole area was not safe because we had heard aircraft come over at night many times not knowing who they were and it was lights out most of the time there while I was there.

After the Battle of the Bulge got word that they were going to get every available man they could for replacements to go up front and it was after Christmas time that it happened. I got my orders and like many of us we were told why and to get ready in a few days to move out. And so it was my last days with the 358. we got trucked to a train depot and then driven to Rouen, France to board another train for some destination unknown. And many guys may recall how it was to ride on those so called 40 and 8 cars

My good buddies I can recall from the 358th was a Frank Brodbeck who came from Columbus, Ohio at Shaker Heights. He was one of our Crane operators who operated the crane off a barge and he was the guy who got us some good equipment and trucks while he unloaded the ships.

Guard and we were told to get onboard and to go to the back of the ship and down the ladders to our place on her. This I recall was Compartment "D" way down close to the propellor shafts and we were to find out later at sea the noise it makes down there.

The Wakefield was the former passenger line SS MANHATTEN, of the United States lines operating out of New York, before she was put into military service. So off we go from Boston, Mass out to open sea and with an escort all the way over that took four and a half days to Liverpool, England. We zig zag every 5 minutes, that way the German subs could not get a good shot at her and with the escorts we felt safe. I can not recall if any of the trucks or equipment we trained with was loaded on the ship. When we got over there it was late at night and they were told to stand off until day break. Next morning we moved into the harbor and we noticed there was activity in the ~~skys~~ over Liverpool, but we got orders to unload and off we went down the gangplank and over to a line to have some coffee and donuts. Well the donuts were nice, but the coffee was the one the make of ~~cherry~~ called ~~Cherry~~ coffee and what a awful taste, we were told to get used to it and it was served by the Red Cross ladies.

From there we got on a train and off we went. We traveled to London, where they switched engines and after a long wait, we got going again and ended up in Southampton, England. It was pouring rain and we got off and marched a long way up a hill to a staging area, that was made up of the 6 man tents. Well needless to say we were soaked and wet right thru, so they let us build a fire to dry out. What a real rotten stinking mess this was to be in.

It was a very long time after they told us to get ready to eat some chow, big deal good old "C" ration cans collected to make a meal for all of us. Each of us had to contribute a can of some for this. The coffee was putrid taste like it was made with some old dirty stocking use has a filter. Well after that so called meal, we went back to the tent area. ~~As~~ soon the guys went out to see ~~what~~ the place was all about. We stayed there in those tents for several days. Then finally we got orders to pack up and get ready to move out.

And so it was the long trip down the hill this time, to board a ship that was to take us over the English Channel to France. BOY what surprise we got when we got to the dock loading area. We were told to get on this English LST, not like ours, but their type and it was wide open to the elements and crowded with men and two GMC 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ s loaded with material. I never looked inside as it was all covered up. Finally after it was getting dark, we moved out to join other ships in the convoy and then after some time off we went in the dead of night. It was a trip I will never forget, Man o Man what a bunch of sick guys we had, I was bad myself. They gave us this Chickery coffee and some bread and dried fish to eat, boy ~~what~~ what a meal that was, none of us ate any thing at all we were sea sick as all hell.

Half way across the channel it started to rain again and hard at times, so we all got damn good wet this time and on that boat there was no shelter at all. All we had was these raincoats to put on

We finally got our orders to move out and get on the train for a destination none of knew at that time. We left Fort Devens, Mass early one morning and off we went. For four days and a half we traveled day and night, stop here and stop there, wait and then move on at any time they got clearance on the track to move.

Well here we are trying to get a glimpse of the cities and towns we passed to see if we could get an idea of where we were. Some how between us all we knew where we were and it was very late at night when we stopped some place and parked with all the shades down. Slowly we moved and then it was way pass midnight when we pulled in this camp.

It was then that we knew where we were, when some person had us all get off the train and line up to walk a long ways to the so called Mess Hall. To many of us it was a shocker and a mystery to us to see this place at night. We were then told to eat and then go outside get a quick shower and I mean it was quick boy it was then did we realize we were dirty from the trip and the coal dust. Lot of guys can remember that stuff.

On that train I was told that I was on KP duty, I said to myself what is that and I soon found out what it was to peel potatoes was pots and pans and serve men on a moving train, I never forgot that one. We had to keep clean on the train as best we could so we had to take turns to wash and shave with a GI Issued double edge razor blade. And I kept that with me for all the time I was in the service.

After this midnight meal we all got outside and your name was called out and you took your two barracks bags with you and these we called the "A: Bag and the "B: Bag. We have all heard of the term (Blow it out your Barracks bag right, so that is where it came from, that I can recall, maybe some other guys will have their own explanation of it. There in the dead of night, I got on this truck and it was loaded with men. Off it went by itself and made stops along the way, till it was your time to get dropped off. When it was my turn, I was greeted by the Charge Of Quarters with some other guys also. He told us to be quiet and follow him. He had a list of who goes where and we were told that we would have to make our own bed and be ready to get up at 5:30AM in the morning!

I was led up to the second floor of the barracks and the location was way down at the end of the barracks, where I met a guy who did help me out that night. He was from Fields Corner, down in Dorchester or area of Boston, His name was Robert Eaton and a tall skinny kid like me with Blonde hair. This guy and I became good buddies and we were paired up to train on a Dodge Weapons carrier, that had the 37mm Anti-tank gun mounted on the back if it. We got very good at what we were to do as each one of us could do each others job well.

The outfit we were in was the 8th Armored division stationed at North Camp POLK, La. just out side Leesville. La. Both of us were assigned to Battery "A: 398th Field Artillery Battalion with the 105 howitzers mounted on a M-7 tank chassis. While in that unit I had my Basic training and advance training and then all the field training they do. That took some months and it was very rough at times for all of us. Then one day after all this training was completed they pulled back into an area and we were told to set up tents in that we were going to be all checked out for movement to go overseas.