

From: Public Relations Officer
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By: Thomas Winship, Coast Guard Combat Correspondent

ABOARD THE COAST GUARD-ASSAULT TRANSPORT, U.S.S. SAMUEL CHASE, OFF THE COAST OF FRANCE, - June 7 (DELAYED) - This is how Coast Guard Combat Photographer Robert F. Sargent, of 34 DeBarry Place, Summit, New Jersey, felt and what he saw --- when he landed in France today with the first boat wave to leave this transport.

"When H-hour finally came I had a mixed feeling of pride and being downright scared. I had dreaded and looked forward to this moment for months."

"When the order 'Lower Away' came, everything was quiet, just the squeaking of the davits and the whispered comments of the men were heard. The soldiers were silent. More than anything else they dreaded the rough boat ride into the beach."

"We were cold and soaked to the skin even before starting our ten-mile trip shoreward, as a choppy sea broke over our square bow. As the task force behind us faded in the morning light, we looked ahead for our first glimpse of France."

"My boat crew --- William E. Harville, Cox., 120 Carroll Ave., Petersburg, Va.; Anthony J. Helwich, Sea.lc., boat engineer, 3064 Brereton Ave., Pittsburgh; and Patsy J. Papandrea, Sea.lc., bowman, 180 Marion St., East Boston, Mass.; and First Wave Commander, Lieut. (j.g.) James V. Forrestal, USCGR, 36 Teller Ave., Beacon, New York, ---

were wonderful about everything., They only had one job to do.
'unload the troops safely on the right time at the right place'."

"Battle smoke and dawn light made an eerie sight. We passed the control vessel, and almost without slowing down, they sent us into the beach. When nearing the shore all we could see was deserted devastated beach and one lone LCVP, looking like a coffin abandoned and beached on the water's edge, and a tank bogged down in the surf."

"Smoke hung over everything and as the coxswain opened his throttle to drive into the beach we saw the enemy-placed obstacles, a tangled mass of timbers, barbed wire and hidden mines. Down the beach we could see the water sprouts of enemy shells rising in the air close to other landing craft, but the beach ahead looked lifeless. We were going to be the first to land at this spot. We wondered if they were waiting for us."

"My eyes were glued to the boat coming in next to ours, and on the water in between, boiling with bullets from hidden shore emplacements, like a mud-puddle in a hailstorm, it seemed impossible that we would make it without being riddled. As I watched the next boat, it suddenly burst into flames and smoke, a white foglike smoke, and it tilted crazily as soldiers crowded to one side to get away from the flames. Evidently, a bullet had set off one of the soldier's hand grenades. "

"The flaming boat surely would swamp, I thought, but with a final burst of speed, he kept plowing ahead, and both boats drove as close to the water's edge as underwater obstructions would permit us. We were in! The ramp went down and our infantrymen jumped off

into chest-deep water to wade ashore, shooting as they waded, but some went down, never to rise again!"

"I continued to watch the boat next to ours as the soldiers came down the ramp and out of the smoke to wade ashore. The boat crew seemed to be getting the fire under control and their motor was still running. If they could get their ramp up they still had a chance."

"By this time we were racing in reverse to get off as fast as we could. Close by, a shell from a German .88 landed, another and a third, closer. They had our range but we just sneaked out from under each explosion."

"Again I looked at the boat which had gone into the beach ablaze. In a display of remarkable seamanship and cool-headedness, the boat crew had brought the fire under control and were backing jerkily and slowly away from shore. All the boats in our wave retracted safely and we headed back to our transport, trailed for the first 1,000 yards by bursting artillery shells dropping one by one off our stern".

"The coast of France this morning was certainly no photographer's party", said Coast Guardsman Sargent, as he climbed aboard his ship, carrying his film in a metal milk can and his wet, salt-stained cameras. Last year, serving aboard this same assault transport he made pictures on the beaches of Sicily and Salerno.

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