

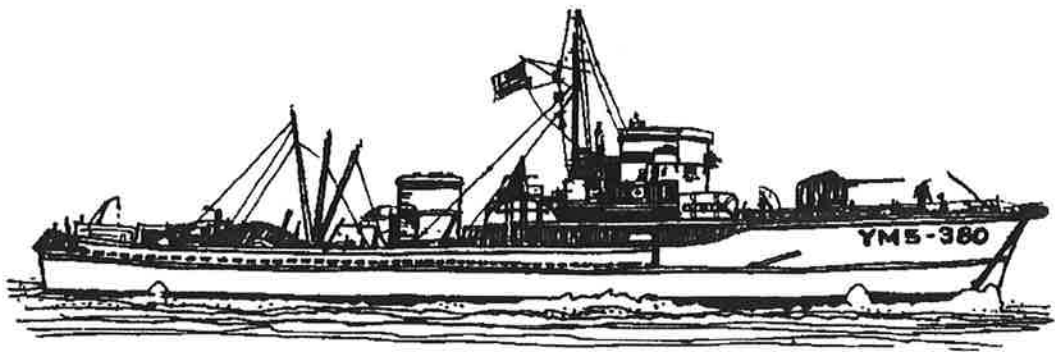
Memoir

**Chief Yeoman
John B. Desrosiers Jr.**

**USS YMS 380
Minesweeping During WWII
Atlantic Theater--Normandy**



**Naval Historical Foundation
Oral History Program
2004**



World War Two

European African Middle Eastern

Navy Mine Warfare

Where The Fleet Goes == We==Bin

Normandy Invasion

Sweep last twenty(20) miles to
Omaha, Beach= France

Cherberg, France

Sweep Chanel to Cherberg, Sweep
Outer Harbor (Large)
Sweep Inner Harbor (Very Large)

Brest, France

Sweep Chanel To ==Sweep very large
Harbor(about ten miles around)
Sweep Submarine Pens.
(Sweeping in a static podition)

By: Johb B Desrosiers Jr.

Enlisted in the United States Navy September 1941, from Mahanoy City, Pa., from the United States Recruiting Station, Allentown, Pa.

Being twenty-two years old and never away from home more than one night or two I realized the Navy life for me was going to take quite an adjustment on my part. Our family was a close family, very caring Mother and Father with a Mom & Pop grocery store, known primarily for fresh sea food, Fish Oysters, Clams. the fish not sold Friday would be given to needy people, The depression in the coal country was very bad, people unable to get work, the blessing was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt , installed the W.P.A., Plan along with the Civil Conservation Corps.,

The WPA paid one dollar a day to workers, don't seem like very much but anickle went long way. The young men went to camp working in the forrest and received thirty dollars a month, twenty five was sent home the youth received five dollars, the soup lines were long, the President appealed to the most wealthy people in the Country to release some of their wealth.

Assigned to the United States Training Station (Boot Camp) Newport, Rhode Island. Reveille 05.00 Breakfast 06:00 Drill Field 08.00 return to Barracs 11.00, clean up for lunch, 12.00. Return to Barracs and then out on the drill field until 16.00, and then Supper 15.00 the evening then used for washing clothes and writing letters home

I played football, basketball and ran track in 1937 my position on the football team was right end, in my senior year I was not substituted played both ways, we won all games except Shamoken beat us 25 to 0, they pulled the option play on us and we never adjusted until it was too late. The next game we played Bethlehem and our coach Mr. Alex Kilkuskie taught us stunting, and able to hold Bethlehem to 0 = 0 game a victory for us.

My Year Book said, Though one of the smallest considered to be the best.

When I joined the UNited States Navy I was smoke free, but after weeks on the parade field and Chief Quartermaster Stonehocker, the Company Co., would give us a few minutes to rest and also declare (Smoking lamp is lit). I decided to try a cigarette, after that I was no longer Smoke Free. Between the drill fiels, reading the Blue Jacket Manual, the do!s dont!s of Navy, receiving the necessary shots, sometime two at a time, studuing for semiform learning a must know to graduate.

Gas Masks were issued to each person in the Company, we instructed how to use them and how important the Gas Mask is. We marched around with them on and to large building with a lot of benches to accommodate the Company. The instructor explained the use of the Gas Mask and the protection. We were told the room as going to be filled with Tear Gas and to realize the protection. The large doors were opened, the Instructor then told us to remove our gas masks, the Tear Gas immediately caused eyes to tear and run and the Nose to run, and coughing also took place. A lesson well learned.

The next thing to qualify in was the rifle range, all had to qualify at One Hundred and Two HUndred Yards, this required a lot of time on the rifle range, those that qualified would go into the pits and raise the targets and then mark the hits.

At this time in my life I feel very fortunate and blessed at age Eighty=Four to be able to recount my time in the Navy. In 1995 I was working as Security Guard Wells Fargo at A.T.&T South Cedar crest, Allentown, Pa. I was unable to perform my duty and therefore I resigned. My Son John B Desrosiers and my wife Lucille Fay Desrosiers took me to see Dr. Wilson, he thought Alzheimers was in its first stages. Recommeded I see Dr. Wasco. Dr. Wasco recommended I have an MRI, he recommended Dr. Arnold G. Salotto.

An MRI was performed and revealed I had a Tumor on my Brain, arrangements were made for the operation November 1, 1995, at the Allentown Hospital by the Allen Neurosurgical Association, consisting of Robert A Morrow, M.D. FACS, Mark c. Lester, MD., FACS., George I. Chovanese, M.D., FACS., Zev Elias, M.D., FACS.

The operation was a success they removed the tumor and weeks later I began to regain my strength as well as my memory started to return better than ever.

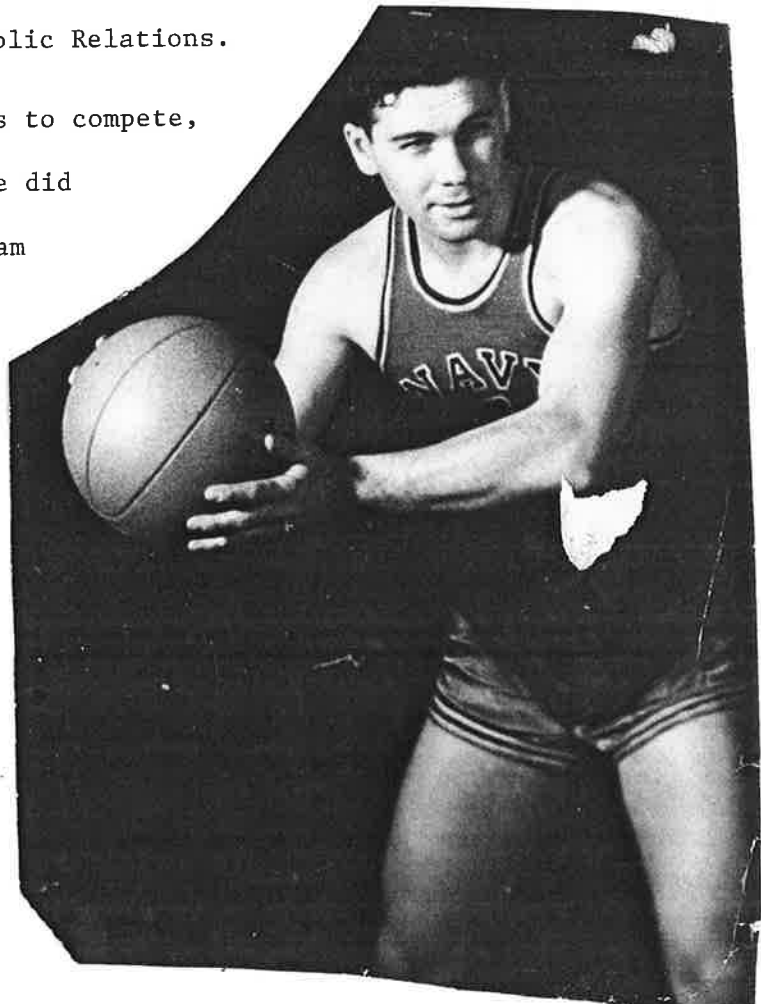
I was able to find four (4) men that had played High School Basketball, we requested the use of the gym from the Athletic Director for a shoot-around and practice. I could see we had a good team. The Athletic Director arranged for the inter company play. we were very fortunate we defeated all the other Companies.

I was asked by the Athletic Director if I would be interested in playing for the Newport Navy Team. I agreed was issued a Navy uniform, pictures were taken and sent to the hometown paper Public Relations.

We were to travel to other Navy Bases to compete, but the War did not allow this travel, we did play the Army's 10th Coast Artillery team every Friday as entertainment for the Service Men and Officers aboard.

The next year the players from College came in as

Chief Petty Officers
as Athletic Directors
The experience and the
size made it impossible to
to make the team.



Sunday December 7, 1941, Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. the Pacific Fleet lost most of its heavy ships, Battle Ships, Cruisers, Destroyers and a heavy loss of life. The big concern now was whether the Japanese would attack the west coast of the United States, as time went by and nothing happened it was a big relief to the Country. President F.D. Roosevelt came on the radio and declared the act of cowardice, that would go down in Infamy, he then declared War on Germany and Japan. Mr. Walter Winchell, the then Radio commentator of the time came on Radio and announced all service personnel had to return as all leaves were cancelled.

Returning to Newport Training Station I asked permission to speak to Chief Yeoman Maguire about working in the office as I was scheduled to go to school Ohio State University, Columbus. Ohio at the end of March. Chief Maguire was happy to have me aboard the Transfer Unit. My job was to be sure that every person going on the draft had his Health Record and his Personal Record, as the volunteers became more and more my job became more demanding and when March came Chief Maguire asked me to forgo going to school and continue doing what I was doing and as I was eligible for promotion I would be advanced

After one year I was rated Yeoman Second class, I had made several requests to be transferred, they kept telling me I was an important part of the Transfer Unit and it would be difficult to replace me and what I was doing.

Finally I appealed to Lt. Cafferky, he as a retired Warrent Carpenter called back to duty and given the rank of Lieutenant. My appeal was that I could best serve my Country aboard a Man_O War, being an Old Navy man he did agree, and within a few days I had orders to report to Pier 92, New York, N.Y.

Arriving at Pier 92, I could tell this Receiving Station was being run very strict, a no nonsense Station. Mr. Walter Winchell had referred to it as concentration camp within our borders. I managed to be very careful while stationed there.

After Four weeks I received orders to report to the Receiving Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. I arrived at 10:00 hours on Friday and was told to stow my gear and report to Personnel Office, I was told I was going to have a Three Day pass. I was also told I was assigned to the U.S.S. YMS-380, that was still under construction at Gren Point, L.I. The leave gave me a chance to go home and visit with my family as it had been a long time since going home.

Monday morning I was paged to come to the Personnel Office. I was introduced to Lt. F.C.P. McGlinn the skipper of the YMS. We spent the week making four and eight off watches, Lt. McGlinn had the list of Officers and Personnel assigned to the YMS, we also assigned the personnel to the three inch 50, the pointer the trainer the people handling the ammunitipn.. It turned out to be exactly as pre prepared. I was allowed evening liberty.

Monday morning Lt. McGlinn and I boarded a Long Island train to Green Point, L.I., we visited the yard where our YMS was being constructed, we were informed the YMS would be completed in one week and that the yard would then take it for shakedown and that we were invited to go along.

The YMS-30 was launched and we went aboard for the yard shakedown. The ship is the most beautiful ship constructed for the Navy/. One Hundred thirty six feet long, twenty five feet wide, made of wood, a three inch fifty gun forward two twentymillimeter anti air craft guns just aft of the flying bridge, two K guns mid ship to launch depth charges, two depth charge racks aft. The ship drew six feet of water forward and six and a half feet aft. The ship even had a desalination plant aboard for drinking water. I could go on and on with the beauty of this ship

The shakedown completed the Ship was delivered to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. for commissioning, we were again allowed to go along,

The Y.M.S-380 docked at the Brooklyn Navy base, the crew thirty (30) Enlisted men and four (4) Officers on board. Everyone getting acquainted finding lockers and sleeping quarters. The Commanding officer of the Brooklyn Navy Base arrived on board to Commission the ship. The ship Commissioned now the U.S.S. Y.M.S.-380. Supplies coming on board, necessary foul weather gear food and all other necessary items.

Two days later two Chief Petty Officers arrived on board to take the ship on shakedown, proceeded to the large gun firing range to test the 3inch 50 gun.

The personnel that were previously assigned to fire the gun. Pointer , the Trainer, the shell handlers. The gun was prepared for firing, , the first round fired tore the two hatches from the wheel house, the concussion was that great, lucky noone was standing in the area. the firing of the 3 inch 50 completed and to the satisfaction of the Petty Officers assigned for this shakedown, next plane towing a sleeve showed up, this was for practice on the two 20 millimeter anti aircraft guns, during the afternoon a lot of the crew took practice.

The next test involved the two (2) K guns midship that fired depth charges. the K Guns were prepared for firing and instructions were given how and when to do the firing. The gun on the Port Side would be fired when the ship leaned to Starboard to allow the depth charge added distance and the same on the starboard side. This accomplished and to the satisfaction of all, the ship was returned to the Brooklyn Navy Yard awaiting further orders.

The best assignment was to report to Portland, Maine for practice on locating Submarines, this water was very deep and Submarines had a good chance to hide, but we had two (2) young soundmen aboard, they were very good, Ed. Arnold and Algosino, they had learned Submarine finding well. We did excellent. It was cold in Portland the Diesel engines were started every hour.

Now it was Christmas time and the crew ^{was} given time off to visit Portland and enjoy the holiday.

Completing the training at Portland, Maine we were instructed to return to Long Island, New York, begin sweeping from the Hudson entrance to the ~~Pacific~~ ^{Atlantic} to Ambrose Light Ship and twenty-five (25) miles, using our magnet mine clearing equipment a large tail eighteen (18) hundred feet long with an outlet at nine (9) hundred feet, one outlet was for 5000 volts A.C., the other outlet was for 5000 volts D.C., we had two generators on board that could generate this amount of power. We had two (2) Electricians aboard that were the best, one Mr. Beebe he was a trouble shooter for the New York Central Railroad. Our radar broke he was able to repair it. This is the kind of people we had aboard, very good.

The Germans were exceptionally good engineers at Mine Warfare, they build three (3) different types of mines. The Acoustic mine the noise of the ships would set it off. The Moored Mine the one with the cable holding a mine with horn like objects on a round bomb. The Magnetic Mine, the most successful meanest device built by man. The magnetic pull of the ship would arm this mine and set it off. This mine could be dropped by aircraft, or minelayer.

We would sweep for three (3) days staying overnight at the Sandy Hook, munitions depot. We would then return to slip provided for our ship at pier in Long Island.

We would stand out at 04:00 and as we approached Ambrose Light we would be told of a large blip on our radar screen and traveling at a great rate of speed it could only be the H.M.S. Queen Mary carrying troops to England, we allow a wide berth for her passage, as this was a very dangerous part of journey, it was a known fact that German U Boats were in the area. One morning while sweeping just past Ambrose Light, Ed Arnold our sound man reported what he believed to be a submarine, the officer on the flying bridge listened and declared it to be a large school of fish.

About five (5) minutes later a submarine surfaced on our Port side, it thank God it was one of ours. Had it been a German U Boat we probably would ~~be~~ ^{be} prisoners of war. There were some appologies, and it was just as well because we had no recognition signal for the submarine, and it would have a disaster had we dropped depth charges.

Lt. R.C.P. McGlinn Captain of the U.S.S. YMS-380 (Plank Owner) received his orders transferrong to another larger ship. Lt. McGlinn made deep inpression in my life, he was a very thoughtful person, a kind person, and I feel that he rates just behind my Father in life. Lt. McGlinn promoted me to Yeoman First Class and told me that when the war was over there would be a job for me , I was to see his Father at the Campbell Company.

Lt. George Harrelson was our new skipper, he was a graduat³ of North Carolina State, Lt. McGlinn told Lt. Harrelson that I was the Helsman in and out of port, general quarters and mine sweeping, that I was very knowledgevill of rgw bridge, I was incharge of ship to ship radio and ship to shore radio, our call letters were Nan Fox King Zebra, New York Station call letters were Nan Able How One. The ship was degaused with cables running around the ship to take the magnet pull away from the ship. The two (2) boxes on the bridge had to be changed every fifteen (15) degrees of course. The log had to be kept every change in course had to be logged, when a magnetic mine was exploded the time and what outlet caused the mine to detonated.

The ship continued to carry out the Mine Sweeping we had been doing , this went on for about one (1) month , we then received orders to procede to Norfolk. Virginia..Before we reached Norfolk our orders were changed we were to report Little Creek, Virginia.,Mine Warefare Training Center.

Upon arival we were told we were to be the school ship for personnel awaiting assignment to mine sweepers.

Our job was to take personnel assigned to mine sweepere, instruct them on deploying the different tipes of gear. The Accustic gear would be a large box like container with an air hammer striking against a metal plate, creating a noise larger than the propellar noise. The gear for the moored mine consisted of a look alike torpedo with fins to keep it parelled with the ship and flying a large flag, attached to this flotation device was acable about one inch in diameter, attached to the cable was a half ton depresser with fins to lower it to about twelve or fifteen feet, attached to either side of the depressor were power cutters capable of cutting the cable when a moored mine came along.

The next device for mine sweeping was the eighteen ^{hundred} feet long cable with outlets at nine hundred feet and eighteen hundred feet. The duty of the generators was explained, each could generate 5000 volts either AC or DC.

The next thing required was to pull alongside a large Navy Fuel Tanker to take on fuel and have supplies passed aboard. An eight (8) inch hauser was passed over to our minesweeper forward and aft and made secure. A person with a large ax was stationed at each hauser. I would have to parelell the ship while this is going on, we would remain in this position for about thirty minutes, we would then be released, believe you me it was tough to keep along side in the wake of the large Oiler. The Oiler would also chang course about ten degrees. The experience doing this for four weeks turned out to be to my advantage, as I had to do this crossing the North Atlantic escorting a convoy of liberty ships to England.

We completed our duty training and were released to Norfolk~~A~~ Navy Base, we appreciated having liberty Norfolk~~A~~, Virginia.

The ship then received orders with other minesweepers and two (2) Destroyer Escort we were to part of the liberty ships convoy to England. To provide safety.

The Liberty ships loaded with material needed by the European Command in the English Theater. The Liberty Ships ready to go, the minesweepers being used as security escort to the convoy, some on the port side others on the starboard side, our minesweeper (of the YMS Class) was on the Starboard side. Two (2) Destroyer Escorts were the rest of the convoy's security. The DE is smaller than the Destroyer but had the same fire power and the same submarine chasing and hunting down as DE. but some faster than the Destroyer. One DE on Port Side one on Starboard Side.

Lt. Harrelson and I had become friends as we had stood many watches on the bridge together in rough weather, most of the crew sea sick. The Captain had reviewed the records of the men and instructed me to see that the progress reports were entered as Lt. Harrelson wanted to promote people as they were eligible. I began to realize we had a very good Captain.

The Convoy of Liberty ships underway for two weeks now and we find ourselves needing Diesel fuel and food supplies, a large Navy Oil Ship becomes available the minesweepers pull along side for refueling and food, but not accustomed to being so close to another ship let alone the size of the Oiler, it was necessary remain along side for about one hour. This is when my training at Little Creek came in handy, it wasn't easy but it got done.

Two weeks later the Convoy entered the English Channel, some of the Mine Sweepers then took up position in the lead with Magnetic Mine sweeping deployed.

The USS YMS- 380 decided to stop ~~at~~ Azores an island in the Atlantic and belonging to Portugal, but a Navy Base at the time. The YMS was refueled and food supplies brought aboard. We then departed for England and as we stood out a Destroyer towing a German U Boat entered the area, it sure was a great feeling.

The YMS 380 arrived in Falmouth, England and we received our first leave in thirty days, it sure was good to go ashore, found the food in England to be mostly Fish & Chips.

Two weeks later our ship received orders to proceed to Portsmouth to join the other YMS ships. The liberty at Portsmouth was much better than Falmouth,

Time went by we would stand out at midnight to practice certain courses, (The British were on double Summer time) it was still light at 11;00 hours.

April & May came and passed. The first week in June our Captain read us a received Command Headquarters laying out the plans for the Invasion of France, We were told the courses we were assigned had to be maintained, we were considered expendible, all records were removed, no liberty was granted, no letters were permitted.

The following TAKEN FROM THE LOG OF THE USS YMS-380. June 3, 1941 underway Saltash, England, 21;00 passed through the gates in column formation with Y-1 squadron of YMS!S, consisting of YMS-406 (SIPA) 380 - 381 - 378 - 379 - 377 - 375 - 358 - 382 - 356 - 358 - . On a signal from SOPA formed into two column the first six (6) of the line in left hand column and the remaining (5) in the right column. Y-1 squadron made sorties with 132 Squadron to form a convoy. UM-1 convoy proceeded along the coast of England. June 4, 1944, 09;00 underway with UM-1 convoy, reversed course and headed back to Plymouth, layed too of the harbor of Plymouth, England. 23;20 set course for point (C) of UM-1 convoy plan. June 5, 1944 10:40 hours Eleven YMS!S and Six (6) P.T. Boats joined the convoy, proceeded to sweep area for operation off Normandy, France. The approximate position 0;00 longitude 50;00 degrees Latitude. 01;09 starboard (0) type gear streamed using one (1) mark (IX) mechanical cutter at outboard end sweep. Mark (XI) mechanical cutter spaced at forty feet, ninety feet and one hundred feet from outboard end. Using a twenty foot pennant and 140 fathom sweep wire. We were one of six (6) sweeps clearing the way, two (2) marked the swept channel, three (3) were standby in the event a sweep became disabled.

The expectation was that we would come under fire from the shore batteries soon after we started sweeping. The Airforce bombers began laying down bombs shortly after we started our sweeping. They were flying about Five Hundred feet above us all night long, at 05:00 we had finished our sweep and were two hundred yards from the beach, we could see the anti landing craft barriers they were placed in such a position that when the men left the Landing Craft they would find themselves in water up their neck and possibly over the head.

The USS CHEMO our mother Ship a mine layer, signaled us to stream our gear on the other side and widen the channel coming out. This required us retrieve the gear and re stream it on the other side, we were in the midsts of doing that when the Airforce Bombers stopped, daylight coming on and the air clearing from the bombing, the Germans discovered our presence that close to the French coast and let about twelve (12) rounds of the heavy guns. We were very fortunate none of the YMS's were hit.

The HMS BLACK PRINCE and the USS QUINCY both heavy Cruisers answered the heavy guns on the high ground as did every other ship. (The invasion force was the largest ever assembled). The Landing Crafts with troops began to the beach, many didnot head the already cleared chanel and were destroyed by what is known as the (Oyster Mine) this type of mine declared ilegal by the Jeneva Convention, but the Germans cared not what people said they could do or not do.. The destroyer task force consisting of Four (4) one stackersa of the Fletcher Class, streamed in on our Starbord side disregarding the swept chanel. The lead destroyer must have bin hit by an OYSTER mine ~~The~~ destroyer didnot sink, but was disabled in the water, the other three destroyers circled the disabled and used its four (4) guns 5 in 38 to support the landing

All morning long the Landing Craft with men aboard kept landing troupes. It was a very sad sight. Two (2) other beaches UTAH and JUNEAU, were landing.

Having been fortunate enough to survive the Germans first counter attack on Normandy, the Y Squadron took up places on the starboard side of the swept channel in intervalls between ships to extend over one mile back in the channel. The Radar on, the sound gear on and both manned by experienced personnel and the flying bridge manned by two (2) officers and two (2) enlisted men with binoculars scanning the horizon for German Fighter Planes, as well a German E boats, trying to disrupt the invasion. The sound gear was listening for the ping that could be the sound of German minnie submarine, they would place a explosive on a large ship.

The hours dragged on, everyone so high on the morning experience, as it was the first time we have ever come under fire, especially such heavy fire. The area called the Mulberry was designated as the anchorage for the Liberty Ships carrying vital supplies to the invasion. The Mulberry happened to be large concentration of moored mines, as the Liberty ships dropped anchor and began to swing at anchor they came in contact with the moored mines, many of them were severely damaged. The YMS-406 and the YMS -380 streamed magnetic gear and began working between the Liberty ships, no further mines were found.

The evening entered into night, it made the watch that more difficult around midnight we heard the sound planes overhead, not knowing wether friend or enemy, the Command Ship was to give the order, but with so many ships and because of the tense happenings all day long, one ship opened fire on the planes all the other ships joined in, the sky was filled with tracers every third shell a tracer, one had to feel you could clime up on the tracers. The planes overhead were our own P-38 Night Fighters, they refused to fly night coverage until a system could be put into place.

June 7Th., the second day of the invasion, about 05:00 hours just at dawn the sky became alive with aircraft, ours towing towing gliders and also with paratroopers, the invasion forces had not established enough to allow this type of action, gliders were being detached too soon over the channel and the paratroopers were jumping too soon. The Germans had many machine Guns , It was not pleasant sight to start the new day on. Many lives were lost. 07:30 hours hours underway for sweeping operation to conduct magnetic sweep. 11:20 hours ceased operation and recovered gear, 12:35 hours streamed magnetic gear and pipe nine (9) mines exploded sweeping with YMS-375.

The invasion forces had only two (2) days to land troops and supplies on shore when a severe storm the one that was a question about the first invasion date, no troops or supplies could be landed, what was there had to hold on. The storm was so severe our ship was unable to anchor thus we were forced to ride out the storm. The Destroyers patrolled the area against a possible German counter attack. While riding out the storm we did not know we had drifted into the area the Destroyers were monitoring, just after midnight we received a challenge, we did not have the recognition signal for the new day, the Captain hurried to the ward room and returned with new challenge for the day, the Destroyer has issued a second challenge, when we returned the correct answer, the Destroyer told us to be more careful about our position,

June 9, 1944, 06:40 underway with squadron. 07:45 Magnetic acoustic gear streamed YMS-379 on starboard beam, 10.17 commenced single ship magnetic sweep 11.04 YMS- 358 took up position on starboard beam. 18:28 fired upon by shore batteries ceased operation and demanded destroyer protection, Destroyer was assigned, but stayed back we would direct where the 88 was firing at us, the Destroyer would get rid of our problem .

June 11, & June 12 underway with YMS-378 (Senior Officer Present Afloat) YMS-347 YMS-304, YMS-378, YMS-380, YMS-381. YMS-304, streamed Magnetic Electronic sweeping gear and did manage to detonate a few mines as the one in the picture on the next page.

At this time I must pause to give credit to the finest men ever assembled to do such a hazardous assignment under never before expected conditions. Lt Harrelson was a great Captain to serve under, ever concerned for his crew.

June 12, 1944 took on 900 gallons of fresh water, 1920 hours took on stores for general mess Barge USATY-- 42. Anchored and set condition 111.

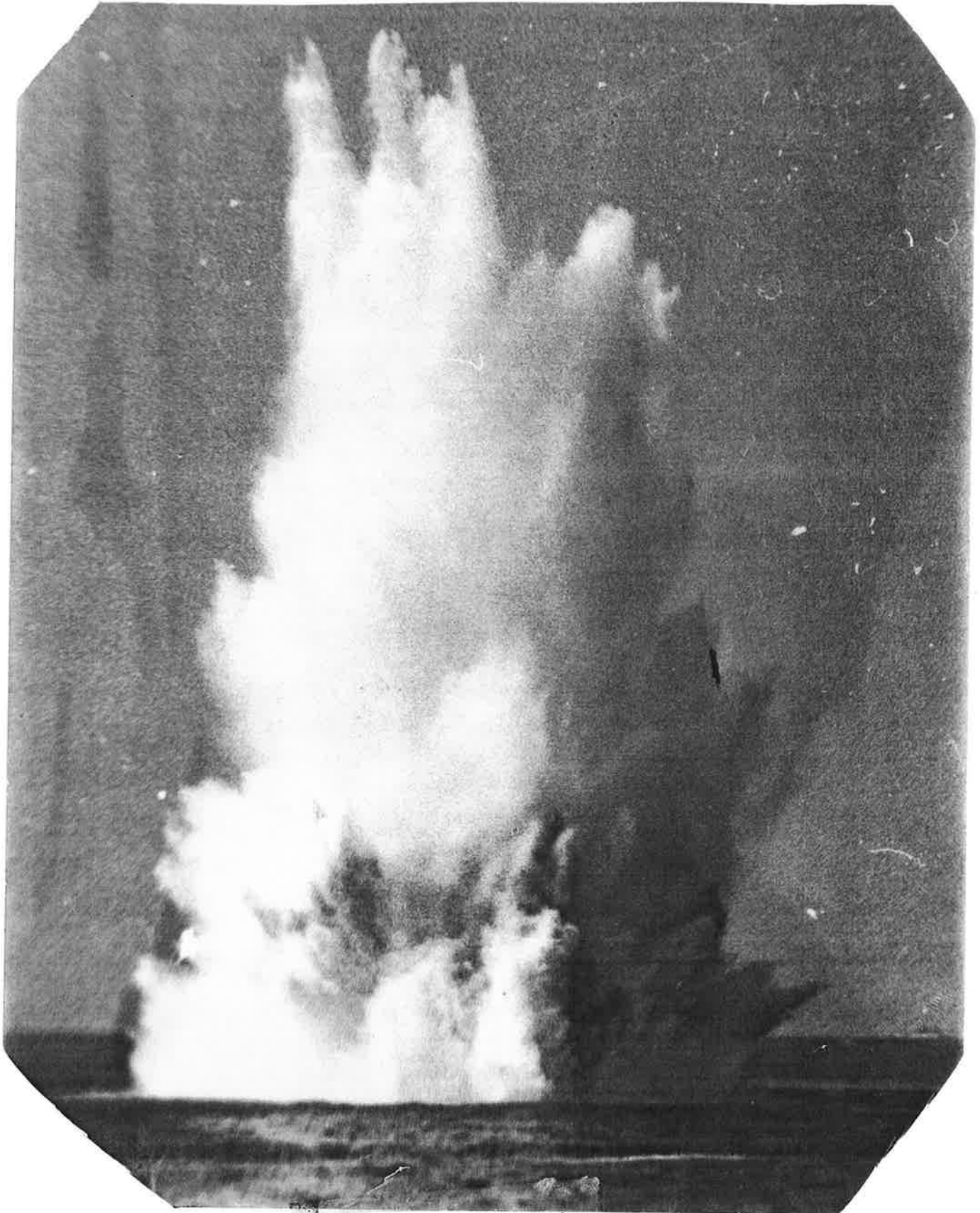
June 13, 1944, 14:30 hours underway with YMS-378, 231, 247, 304, 381 and 382 underway for Plymouth, England, to refuel and take on food for the mess.

Back in England, the crew chipped-in for the purchase of a case of scotch, it was placed in the galley officers and enlisted men toasted the return to safety and being alive.

Upon returning from England, to the Normandy theater of war, we were assigned the task of sweeping channel to Cherbourg, so men and supplies could be landed safely. The six (6) minesweepers working our way toward Cherbourg and detonating magnetic mines as we proceeded.

The YMS-380 and the YMS-378 were lead ships side by side, June 30, 1944 we requested permission to fall back and make repairs on our magnetic gear and for up on the end. 08:00 the YMS-304 triggered five (5) oyster mines one under the 304, causing it explode and sink within two (2) minutes the other lead YMS was also damaged but did not sink, we sure thanked our blessings, this happened off of St. Vast of the coast of France in Eight (8) fathoms of water, is also six (6) feet, we were sweep in forty-eight (48) feet of water.

MAGNETIC MINE EXPLODED FROM GEAR STREAMED BY USS YMA-380
WHILE SWEEPING IN NORMANDY FRANCE, JUNE, 1944



After the June 30, 1944 devastating loss of the YMS-304 (SOPA) received a direct hit from an Oyster Mine, the ship exploded and sank in eight fathoms of water. The ship's Captain M.J. Bienvenu Jr., was in the ward room when the ship disintegrated, he was thrown clear uninjured he found two (2) other men from the YMS-304, badly injured and barely able to stay afloat, Lt. Bienvenu JR., was able to help keep the men afloat by holding on to pieces of lumber from the ship, the YMS-378 had also been hit by an Oyster Mine, but not directly and was still able to remain afloat, managed to get the survivors in the water.

The YMS-378 had taken our place the YMS-380 having requested to fall back and make repairs on our Magnetic Sweeping gear and then forming-up on the stern. The remaining YMS minesweepers YMS-380 YMS-381 YMS-304 YMS-231, continued to sweep and clear the channel to Cherbourg, France, marking the cleared channel, about two weeks later we arrived at the Cherbourg harbor, we found two harbors one outside harbor and one inside harbor, both very large.

The four minesweepers of the YMS class entered the outer harbor of Cherbourg we formed up in echelon position, all deployed gear on the starboard side the to sweep for acoustic mines and on the starboard side the (O) type gear was also streamed to cut the cable holding the moored mine and allow it to come to the surface and be destroyed by twenty millimeter anti-aircraft guns, at good distance to maintain safety. Some acoustic mines were activated, also some moored mines brought to the surface and destroyed, we then deployed the magnetic sweep gear and began to sweep for magnetic mines, we also found a few of those. We continued to sweep for about thirty (30) days maybe even more, declared the harbor clear and safe. Days later mines began to sink ships. The Explosive Ordnance Detail was brought in to check the mines had counters and only exploded after a certain amount of ships passed over.

Supplies and fuel were taken on and then we were assigned the task of sweeping channel to Brest, France.

Before leaving for Brest, we were briefed on the situation in and around Brest, the Jersey Islands were still occupied by the Germans, and had large guns that could reach out along distance, we were advised to give plenty of distance while passing, and they suspected German submarines to be located there. Brest had been a fierce fire fight between American forces and German forces and the city was left in ruins, also the German Army was being contained at the far end.

While Second Class Electrician FROST was on shore he found a puppy needing help, he brought the puppy aboard ship and asked Lt. Harrelson for permission to bring the puppy on board that he would take care of her and be responsible for her. The captain gave permission and we had a mascot (LADY).

Before leaving Cherbourg I asked our Personnel Officer if I could be rated Chief Yeoman. The Personnel Officer told me the Officers thought so much about the way I was handling the bridge, they decided to recommend me for Warrent Officer. I was flattered, but I remember Warrent Officers was reserved for personnel with fifteen years of service.

The Four Minesweepers YMS Class left Cherbourg, formed up in echelon position streched our Magnetic Gear and began our trip to Brest clearing a channel as we went. Arrived at Brest Harbor, found an opening about two hundred yards long, cliffs on both sides towered about two hundred feet. the harbor was huge, you had the feeling you were still in the channel.

Many of the mooring stations were booby trapped. The YMS-304 tried to tie up on a mooring station and was lost to us. That left only three (3) minesweepers to clean up the large harbor.

No acoustic mines or moored mines were found, but magnetic mines were found the fishermen about would not pay attention to what we were doing and end up lost when we would detonate a magnetic mine. The fishermen were nice people they had diesel boats but no fuel, they would ask for a fifty (50) gallon drum of fuel, in return they would give us a case of Cognac. Shared in the galley.

It was about the December 21st., and we allowed to return to Brest for supplies, fuel and rest, while returning to Cherberg we miss judged our distance with the Jersey Island and had a few rounds dropped around us, fortunately no damage was done and we proceded to Charberg.

Cherberg in our absence had A USO canteen opened and it gave us a place to go and dance or whatever. I picked up the mail and found that the rate of Chief Yeoman was closed. I went to the ward room and Lt. Harrelson was there I related the conversation with the personnel officer. Lt. Harrelson told me to rate myself Chief Yeoman and date it back three months. The Personnel Officer was not happy with my going to the Captain about this. I knew I was going to have to be regulation in my comming and goings.

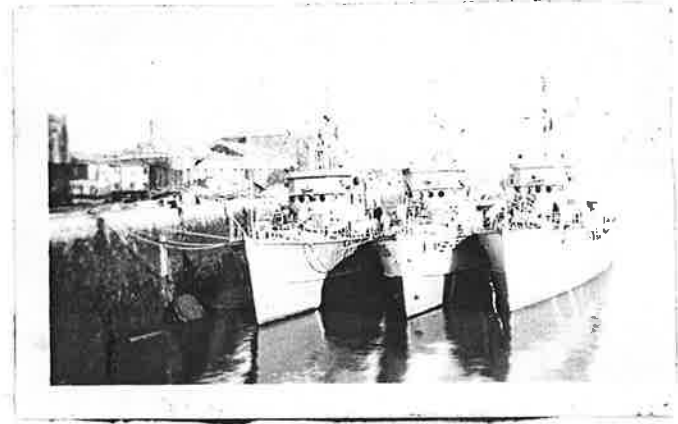
Christmas Eve December 24th., at the theater enjoying the show when the lights were turned on the show discontinued, all small craft personnel were to report to their ships. We stood out just beyond the outer harbor and witnessed tradegy, a troupe ship with about nine thousand troops aboard had been torpedoed it was the German!s Push of the Bulge, they disrupted everything they could on land hoping to halt the advance of the American Forces. The two (2) destroyers escorting the Troop Ship (American Leased) found the submarines and dropped depth charges the German Submarines were killed and so were the men in the water, the concussion from the depth charges, caused massive hemoraging along with the very cold water in the thirties. The Troop Ship was just outside the outer harbor, the troops were fully dressed in winter garb, side arms, boots with small (may-west) life jackets noone instructed the personnel that when jumping from any height to hold on to the vest, or go through it. These troops were replacements for Genersl G.S.Patron!s army. Men bobbing around as though alive, were not. We had valliant men tied lines around themselves and went in the fridgit water tied lines about men, but all were dead. Christmas Day about 4000 men were dead on the dock.

Returning to Brest we deployed our magnetic mine sweeping gear having learned a lesson at Cherberb that the Germans had placed counters in the magnetic mines, we decided to double check our previous sweeping.

Captain George Harrelson had kept his word as to promoting personnel as became eligible did happen we promoted Ralph Wilson to yeoman Third Class, we also promoted first class people to Chief five (5) you can see them on the photo on the following page.

When we would dock for the evening we would tie-up side by side for further protection the on board ship would deploy large search lights and maintain a General Quarters situation, the other YMSs would maintain a secure watch.

The picture on the right shows how we would dock. We were permitted to go ashore, but the conditions were so bad and the French people blamed the Americans for the destruction of Brest, the Germans had treated the reguin good because they were receiving the dairy needs from this part of the Country. On my station in

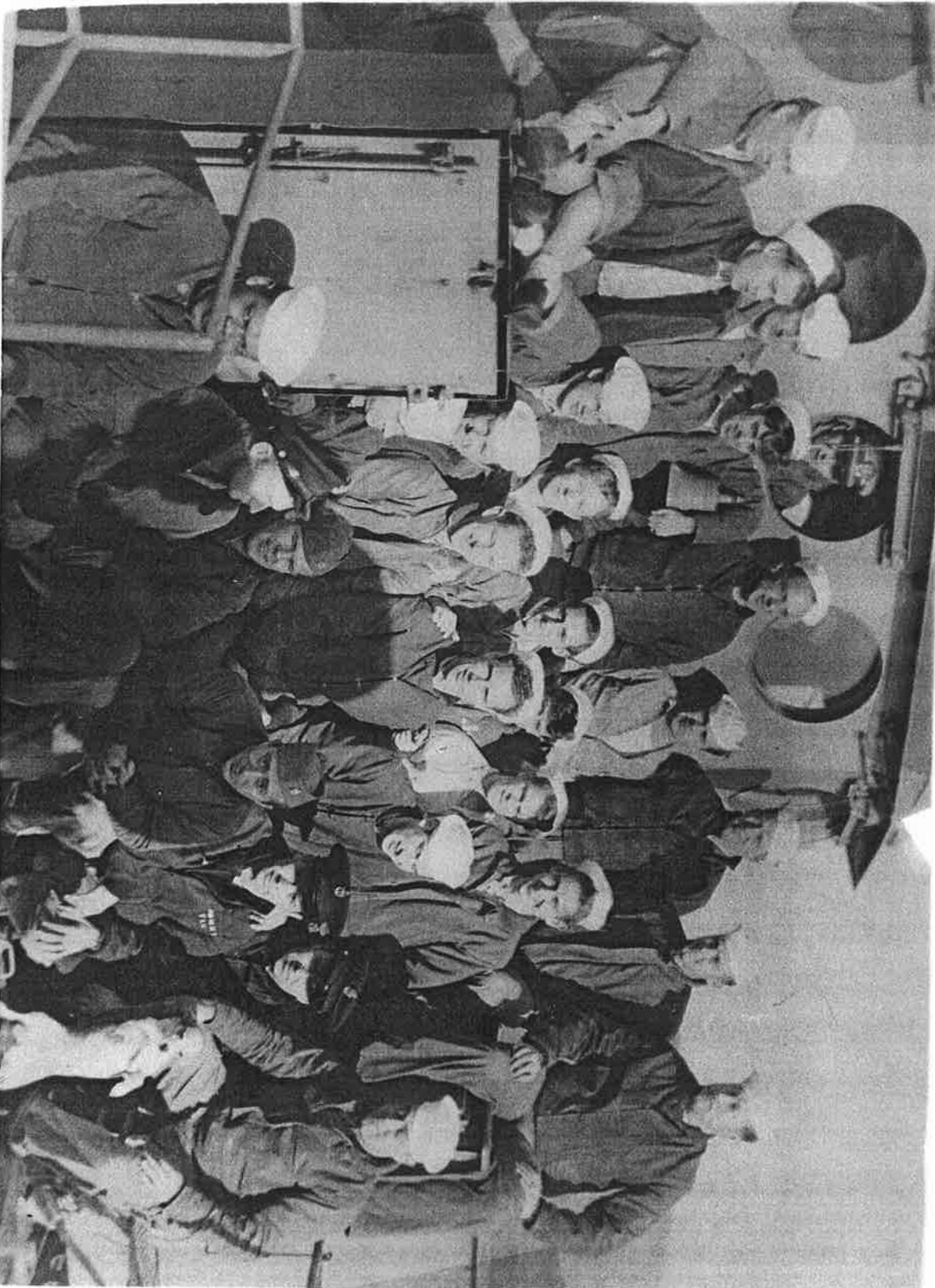


the bridge a Thompson Machine Gun was there for my use, so on walking through the streets I would take along. We would encounter French people cleaning up. they would see us coming and go to the German Handgraned we would tell them we were American Friends, we didnt stay away from the ship, and didnt do this more than once.

Having rated a third class Yeoman, The United States Headquarters at Le Havre, requested that the Chief Yeoman be transferred to Le Havre. The Captain needed me on the bridge and refused to transfer me. He told me we were going to go home in a few weeks.

The Crew of the USS YMS-380 picture taken aboard the ship in Brest France. Lt George Harrelson in the port hole Commissary Stewart T. Smith, Chief Commissary Atewart R. Yent, Chief Bosen Robert Corbin, Chief Moter Mechanic Jack Bolt, Chief Yeoman John Desrosiers, Chief Moter Machinest R. Nestor. P.O. Nardelli holding Ships mascot LADY, and a real one. Behind LADY, First Class Corpsman B. Hunt, didnot want to become Chief as it would take him to the Marine Core., and he would have to land with the Marines.Lt. George Harrelson remained in the Navy and became a full CAPTAIN. Other very vallient shipmates, but too many to remember all names.

The photographer for all pictures was George Meier, Grand Rapids, Michigan Lt.Jg.



The USS CHEMO a mine layer and our mother ship requested that we do a static sweep in the submarine pens, that meant we would go into the submarine pens and then a launch would then come in and deploy or magnetic tail, we then would send 5000 thousand volts A. C. to detonate any magnetic mines in the Submarine Pens, we pulsed for quite a long time what seemed to the crew an eternity we were standing still and mine sweeping. The magnet sweeping gear was being retrieved when there was a big commotion on the fantail, the magnetic sweeping gear was attached to a moored mine and it was very close to the fantail. The launch was called and they were able to detach the mine, in the meantime the Captain told me to hold the ship against the seawall at the lowest possible speed. This too seemed like an eternity, not knowing what was happening with the mine that we became entangled with.

The Navy Base at Le Havre sent a second urgent transfer of the Chief Yeoman, there was nothing else Captain Harrelson could do but transfer me. Orders were written for my transfer and I joined a mail carrier headed for Le Havre, three days later arrived in Le Havre, reported to the Personnel Officer, he was quite upset and wanted to know why it took so long for me to arrive. I explained that my duties on the Mine Sweeper were needed and it did take me three (3) days to get to Le Havre by mail carrier. He understood told me to have some lunch and report back to him, he was going to endorse my orders and place me on an LST in the harbor bound for England, he said the Commanding Officer was quite upset at my not arriving sooner and The United States Forces for Paris, France.

I arrived in England, was able to draw the money allotted for new uniforms I was able to really become a Chief Yeoman, uniform and all, about ten (10) days later the crew of the YMS-380 arrived, we had some time together again.

Transferred to a United States L.S.T. Repair center, Saucolm Devon, England. Three (3) hotels were leased, One (1) General office, Two (2) Officers quarters, Three (3) Chief Petty Officers quarters and Resturant. This was the Country Club of England. Fifty (50) homes were leased for the enlistee personnel. I was not expected to do anything. Being there about one (1) month an Admiral came down from London to ~~p~~resent me with the Bronz Atar Medal, it was a pleayant surprise to me and a very proud time in my life. Lt. George Harrelson also received the the Bronz Star Medal, Boatswain Robert Corbin also received the Bron Star Medal.

I was stationed at the L.S.C. Center when President F.D. Roosevelt passed away, it was a sad time because he was the first president i ever voted for.

Two (2) months later the Germans surrenered, the war was over in Europe. The Base was closed and all headed for the good old United States. We traveled by train to Liverpool and boarded HMS Queen Mary for her last trip returning troops, Fifteen thousand troops aboard, Ten Thousand Army, Five Thousand Navy.

The HMS Queen Mary made it to America in three (3) days a record the ship didnot have to zig zag. The Statue of LIberty sure was a beautiful sight

Thirty (30) days leave was granted, it sure was wonderful to be back home. When the leave was over returned to the United States Receiving Station, Philadelphia, Pa., for reassignment

Reassignment came in a troop train to California, I was incharge of one car. The train stopped at resturants along the way, most of these Navy men were in the Navy a long time and we^{re} not any trouble.

While I was waiting for a Destroyer to go aboard, an A-Bomb was dropped on Heroshima and then Nagasaki thus ending the war in the Pacific I was asked where I would like to go, I asked to return to Philadelphia Officers Seperation Center.

While at the officers center I was Offered A Commission by the Captain of the Center, ~~s~~til today I dont understand why I refused, but did thank him.

The Captain again called me to his office, this time he offered me a job with Office of the Secretary of the Navy, the request came for one Chief Yeoman] from this District, The Captain told me that I had to re-enlist to have this position I agreed and went to the Medical Group examining Officers for release. The physical went well, and it seemed I would be able to re-enlist and accept the the position in Washington, D.C. In the afternoon a call came they wanted to see Desrosiers, I reported to the Doctors, only to find they wanted to take another X-ray because they could see things on the smaller X-ray that I would not have been able to enter the NAVY. I told them of a period of time on the Minesweeper that I was very sick. they called it (Cat-Flu), it was probaly pneumonia, I told the Captain about the negative results and that I was going to United States Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa., Different tests were made, a Bronkscope was lowered into my lung and piece of tissue removed, everything was declared clear, but the only thing for me was to be discharged, I told the Doctor I had over five (5) years in the Navy and had intended to make it my career and I was^{not} comfortable leaving the Navy at this time and be at the Veterans Administration, I was granted thirty (30) days leave, returning more tests were done, but I still wasnot satisfied, given another thirty (30) days leave, returned and then was transferred to the Navy Station, Philadelphia, Pa. I was discharged from the United States Navy December 17,1946.

Sound Man Edward Arnold, having the list of names of the crew members was able to find about eighty (80) percent of the crew, the first reunion was held at Plymouth, Ma.,Reunions were held in the Carolinas about five (5) times as quiteafew men were from that area, two (2) reunions were held in Iowa, Two (2) were held in Penna., Two (2) were held in Michigan,the Captain held two (2) in Gulf Breeze, Two (2) were also held by Captain Harrelson in Florida the last one at home October 1994 the captain passed away a few months later. no further reunions were held .

The USS YMS- 380 was transferred to Norway at the VORMS (M-321) March 22, 1945. The USS YMS-380 was then sold to June 7, 1948.

On a personal note in behalf of myself and the enlisted personnel of the USS YMS-380, when we were Commissioned we had (0) Chiefs aboard, when the Ship was turned over to the Norwegians, we had five (5) Chiefs aboard and all other Personnel aboard third Class and above, thanks to Captain George Harrelson.

After the war many minesweepers of the YMS class were sold Off:

The CALIPSO -- Jacques Costeau.

The FLYING GOOSE -- John Wayne.

Thank You!

Respectfully,

John B,DEsrosiers Jr.

P.S. The casualties from the twenty-four (24)^{Hours} of the Normandy invasion compare to the casualties of Antetum, MSD, a Gettysburg, Pa.,

The Cemetery in France attest to this,

Another P.S. When the mine warfare association was formed I joined and I was member 343, and now it has grown to over five thousand members, I use to suggest to our people, join the association, let them plan the reunions we could go as a group and enjoy the fruits of their labor, but the majority wanted to keep it the way it was, they had reunions in places like Reno, etc.