CECIL'S STORY

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As soon as we entered the Lingayen Gulf a boat would come alongside and ask if we were operational. Sgt. Bryant concurred, they then asked if we could disconnect from the toe? We then assured them that we could. I don't remember whether we cut the line with the fire ax, or if we were able to disconnect the halter. I do remember leaving the tow on our own power, though I do not remember how we managed to locate our outfit. I had lost so many pounds and was so sick and weak I could hardly walk. When we reached our headquarters someone spoke to the Lieutenant in charge and told him how sick I had been. He in turn had someone drive me to a makeshift hospital. (It was a large tent with a lot of cots). I don't remember whether I was able to see a doctor or just a medic. Anyway I was told to find an empty cot and I would be seen as soon as possible. I must have waited at least two hours when some Red Cross Nurses came to

my cot. They asked me if I had seen them earlier? I told them no. One with a note pad started asking me questions such as: my name, serial #, rank, outfit, etc. I said "hold on, what is this all about?" She said, "for the **Purple Heart."** I told her, "I'm not wounded, just sick." She looked at the other two as if to say "I didn't realize we had sick people in here too." She then said she would send a doctor in soon. It wasn't long before a doctor came in and asked me about my ailments. I told him about how I had been throwing up everything I ate. He came back with some pills, they must have been yellow, and he gave them to me in a small paper bag, telling me the dosage. The weather was very hot and muggy and I had worn a khaki summer uniform. I had been told that I could probably hitch a ride in one of the jeeps or cargo trucks. I had put the pills in my shirt pocket, and started walking away on a dusty road leading back in the direction of our outfit. I then started thumbing the first vehicle coming. Pretty soon I got a ride with two Colored Soldiers driving a truck. They took me nearly to my Orderly Room tent. I then went out to a fresh water blister to get a cup of water to take my pill. My shirt was already wet with sweat. I felt into my pocket for my pills but they had already dissolved. My pocket and underneath my pocket had turned yellow. No pills. I never went back to the hospital again, and no **Purple Heart**.

I returned to work on another tug boat, with the same crew, while the one we had crossed the ocean on was under repair. Landing craft covered the beaches as far as one could see. Larger landing craft were anchored near the beaches, and ships were anchored throughout the gulf as far as one could see. There were also partially sunken ships, many sunken with parts of their ship just below the surface, of which we would encounter later on. Five battle wagons were in the gulf, shelling land areas. It reminded one of a vessel scrap yard. Later on we would be busy trying to mark these sunken vessels with buoys**. These battle wagons were firing their 14 inch guns day and night**. They would continue to fire this way for five more days. Amphibious ducks were busy carrying supplies from ship to shore. This was the first time that I had seen the battle wagons in action. I could not believe the noise they made, and the puff of smoke that would follow the shell. At night you could actually follow the shells by eyesight as they left their gun barrels. I guess this was due to the shells coming from the gun barrels being so hot, or the flame from the explosions? We would be working on our boats, both day and night, between shore and the battle wagons. We would actually be passing underneath these shells, of which would only be no higher than two to three hundred feet above our heads.

One day while riding in the water we saw a **dead Japanese soldier** floating in the water. We could tell the body was Japanese by the color of the uniform and the style of clothing. I believe Joe McAleer was running the tug boat. We were attempting to get close to the body when we caught the scent. The closer we got the worse the scent became. The ones on deck began going back inside the boat, trying to get away from the smell. I asked Joe to come alongside the body. I had seen something hanging from his waist. I got a boat hook and pulled the body close enough to the boat where I could see that it was a pistol hanging from the scabbard by a braided rope. I then hooked the

boat hook into the pistol and cut the rope away. It appeared that the soldier had been wounded as well as having a hole in the middle of his forehead. I then pushed the body away from the boat and brought the pistol onboard. The people onboard were complaining how bad even the pistol smelled. I got a bucket of water, put the pistol into the water and put it on the stove burner. I kept the water boiling with the pistol in the boiling water, for at least ten to fifteen minutes. We threw the water away but the pistol still smelled bad. I would soon sell the gun to Lee D. Bryant for twenty bucks. I would have to agree that a dead human, especially in hot weather, and about three to four days old, smells the worse of anything I can ever remember smelling.

Japanese Zeros would attack every few days, usually in the late afternoons. Ship sirens would start blasting away and smoke screens would be covering the gulf. We were just as afraid of our own gunfire coming from U. S. armed landing craft and Navy ships as we were from Japanese Zeros. This was because when the Zeros would come in, they would come in very low, skimming across the water (hoping American gunfire would be avoided, due to their firing at each other). Both was happening, it was so bad that when we heard gunfire we would stop the boat and run below deck into the engine room. If we were tied up when this happened, we would immediately rush below deck into the engine room to avoid our own gun fire.

I must tell this story on myself. **Lena**, (the girl who I had met while stationed in Brooklyn, NY) had been writing me very often, probably two to three times each week. To my surprise, one day she had sent a letter in a heavier envelope than normal. Inside I had found a small **record**. She told me in the letter that when she was down-town in N.Y., she had found a place where she could talk on a microphone and a record would be produced of the message. I guess this had really been popular to wives and sweethearts sending these recorded, "I love you" messages to overseas G.I.s. Anyway, here I was receiving one. The only record player we had was in the orderly room, and I was much too embarrassed to go there and play it. So I put it into my barracks bag to hold until I could find a more private place to hear it. After all, I had no idea of what might be on the record. It was very small, so it could not be too long a message. I remember going into town that day, and I believe the person I had gone with was **John Benson**. As we got near our camp, on returning from town, I could hear an American girl's voice very loud, as if it was on a loud speaker. (We had not heard an American girl in so long, naturally when you hear one, it sounds astonishing). But something about this voice had a ring to it. She was saying, "Sweetheart, I miss you so much and I love you so much". It also sounded like a Yankee girl, and on top of this it sounded like she was from Brooklyn. No! Could it be Lena?

The closer I got to the tent the louder it would sound. I was getting so embarrassed, I was afraid to enter the orderly room. Before I got inside I could see Robert Pannell and someone else standing near the record player. I felt like killing both of them. All the soldiers in camp at the time knew all about it and started saying, "Sweetheart I love you and miss you so much"! I took the record from the record player and took off for my

barracks bag. Sure enough I discovered he had taken the record from my barracks bag and had been playing it for everyone. To the best I can remember, it would warp from the hot weather and render itself useless by the next time I tried to listen to it. I don't remember anyone else ever receiving a record like this one. How I would like to have kept this record until today. (May 1998).

I would begin to see and talk to many **UA Infantry soldiers** when going into town. These soldiers had been fighting the Japanese in hand-to-hand combat since coming ashore on D-Day. I would not have to be told how such conditions had affected them, just looking at them was enough. I then realized how lucky I had been to be in the outfit of which I was in. Many of them had gone without sleep for days. The UA soldiers, marines, and with the help of the Filipino soldiers, were trying to reach and rescue the 78,000 disease-ridden American and Filipino troops left on Bataan. Every minute would count, as it was thought that the Japanese soldiers would kill each one rather than see them released, to tell of the horrible treatment of which they had gone through. I would not know for many years after the war of the cruelty these prisoners had received by the Japanese. I would learn later about the "**Bataan Death March**", and even become a next door neighbor to one of the survivors.

I had been pulled from the tug boat to operate a 26 foot D-boat. This was something like a speed boat, it had a six cylinder Chrysler engine and a closed in cabin behind the engine and would hold about six to eight people. This boat was considered pretty fast back then. It was used for passenger service. Most of my duty was to ferry a Harbor Pilot to and from incoming ships, or departing ships. I would also chauffeur the Port Commander to such ships as he directed. I would also chauffeur Navy Officers to their ships from land, or go pick up Naval Officers from their ships at anchor and deliver them to the respective pier or to another ship. The worse part of this job would be when I had to pick these people up from a ship which was under-way. If I was picking up the person, he would have to climb down a rope ladder and hang on while I would try to put my boat underneath him. I would keep the same speed and as close to the ship as possible, so that he could step off, either onto the bow or onto the fantail part of my boat. This got very hairy, especially when the wind was blowing hard enough to cause large swells. These swells would keep the boat bouncing up and down, also driving it against the ship hard enough that you would surely think it was going to damage the boat. Many times I thought surely the boat was going to ride a wave up, then slam over against the person on the rope ladder and crush this person against the side of the ship.

A flat barge had been run ashore (leaving half the barge in the water and the other half on the beach.) A tent had been erected on the barge and cots placed on it. This was the living quarters for us troops who operated the small boats. We would also keep our boats tied next to a fabricated dock, which connected to the barge. Sleeping here was much cooler than ashore due to the ocean breeze. Most of the time we could keep the sides rolled up and tied. When we got a blowing rain we would have to tower them, so as not to flood our cot and barracks bag, of where we kept all our possessions.

At this time I am not sure when our Organization would be changed from the **350th Boat Company**, to the **375th Harbor Craft Company**. This did not affect us in any way except we now would have to write all our mail corespondents the new mailing address. We had no change in personnel or command activities.

My mother had bought and mailed me a **gold chain bracelet**, which had my name engraved on it. (This may have been a Christmas gift, I do not remember.) Anyway I remember I had placed all the things from my pocket and my bracelet onto my cot while I went ashore to take a shower. (We had rigged up a fresh water shower, on shore and right near the barge.) When I came back in from taking the shower and reaching my cot, I noticed some sand had blown in onto my cot. I took my towel and started swishing my cot with the towel to rid the sand. (My cot was near the end of the barge which was in the deeper part of water.) It was also right near the side of the barge. About the second or third swish I made with the towel, I caught a flash of something shiny going much further than the sand was going. I knew immediately it was my bracelet. I just couldn't believe I had done this! Immediately I dove in the water, thinking I might see it going down. (The water was probably six to ten feet deep at that location.) I swam on to the bottom, looking in every direction hoping I could spot it. To my disadvantage there was a shadow from the barge in this location and the dock was also nearby, making distractions. There were also slight swells from the wind, causing the sand to move and mix with the water. I must have made a dozen dives trying to get a glimpse of something shiny, but no luck. I even tried the next day while there was very little movement in the water, but to no avail. I felt so bad about losing this bracelet. At the time wrist bracelets were very popular, and I knew my mother had spent a lot of money for it, being 14 karat gold. Each day I would think, "when and what can I tell her about the bracelet." Many years later I have wondered so many times would the bracelet be further out into deeper water or would it be further ashore, and maybe lying in dry sand? Maybe some native kid, while walking on the beach, would see a shining object and pick it up. I would prefer the latter.

I guess we had been in the Lingayon Gulf for two to three weeks when a friend of mine, (John Benson) and a friend of John's met some **Philippine gorilla soldiers**, who wanted John and his friend to go with them. They were to go north of White Beach to a town of which was still under Japanese control. They wanted to take two American soldiers to the Philippine people to prove to them that the Americans had returned. John and his friend agreed to go, so they went on a small sailboat one night. The town was **San Franando**, I believe. The gorilla soldiers brought them into a Philippine home. They were to stay one day and meet the town mayor and other officials, but due to the Japanese soldiers' presence, they were unable to leave the house for two days. When John and his friends got back, being AWOL all these days, the CO sent for them to come to the Orderly Room immediately. John and his friend told the CO where they had been. The CO could not and did not believe their story. So they were put on a special detail of digging a drainage ditch and restricted to Quarters for a given period. John was a good friend of mine, yet I could not believe it either.

Weeks passed and one day John came to me and asked if I would like to go to a party with him that the Philippine gorillas were giving him. (John's other friend had been transferred to another location.) He told me it was on the following Sunday, of which we could get off. I told him I would think about it. Sure enough, on a Saturday noon, two gorilla soldiers came to his tent. John came over to my tent and wanted me to come over and meet the soldiers. John introduced me to them and told them that the other American soldier had left the area and maybe I would take his place. We talked for a while and were assured that we would be back by Sunday night. (At this time the American troops had already run the Japanese soldiers further northeast near **Baguio**.) The location we were going to was more inland into the jungle, therefore we would have to walk.

We took off, wearing our field Army dress and boots. We walked through trails in the jungle, seeing very few Philippine people. They would look at us as if they were seeing a ghost. They would speak to the Philippine gorilla soldiers and the gorilla soldiers would talk back to them, although we did not know what either of them said. Finally before dark we came into a small village, where a few families of Philippine people lived, as well as a building where a group of gorilla soldiers were living. We were brought into a bamboo house and shown where we would sleep for the night. We were given a drink, known as **nepa**. Something in the order of home-brew. Many of the village people gathered around and would show us a small girl of whom a Japanese soldier had stuck a sword completely through her chest. She had lived, leaving the scar on both the front and back of her chest. They told very horrible stories of how the Japanese soldiers had treated them. Chickens were a luxury for them, yet we saw a few walking around under the house we were to sleep in. Later on more gorilla soldiers would appear. We were finally shown into the building where all the gorilla soldiers were waiting to eat. They were already drinking nepa. We were told to sit and join in. Some women would soon come in bringing baked chicken and rice. There was also some kind of bread served. I could tell by the way the Philippine gorillas were eating it was quiet a feast for them. There was a lot of talking from everyone and a lot of drinking.

I do not remember going back to the house where we slept. John and I were awakened by roosters crowing the next morning underneath where we slept. Mats had been spread across the bamboo floor and some white sheeting was placed on the mats. It was near noon when we awakened. We had a hang-over headache and wondered how we would ever be able to walk back to camp. We were given a bucket of water to wash our face with and then given something to eat. I remember very little about the walk back to camp. I remember being very tired and having a hard time getting up the next morning. I would hear later that the Mayor of the town where John and his friend had stayed (when the Japanese soldiers were still in control) would welcome John back and give him the key to the city. The CO was very much embarrassed to find out John's story was actually true.

One afternoon I had taken the Port Commander a far distance out into the Gulf and left him off on a ship. He told me to stand by for him, he would not be long. This ship was anchored, so I would cut the engine off and let the boat drift away with the tide, or the wind, whichever would be carrying me away from the ship. For some reason I had tied a pair of pants to a line which was attached to the stern of the boat. I had done this to clean the pants. I had forgot the pants and they were still tied to the line. I had let the boat drift quiet a ways from the ship. I had been watching the ship quiet often. I knew when the Port Commander was ready to go he would have one of the signal-men flash the signal light at me. I cranked the engine, pulled the forward/reverse lever to go forward and the engine would go dead. I re-cranked it again and tried to go astern, it would go dead again. I tried once or twice more, nothing. Here I am drifting out to sea and the boat won't crank! For some reason I thought, "could my pants be wrapped up in the screw?" I had already seen this happen, I guess this was the reason I thought of it. I pulled my shoes off, pulled my shirt off and jumped overboard to examine the propeller. I dived down under the boat and felt for the propeller, all I could feel was a big bundle of rags. I dove two or three times more trying to pull the pants loose, with no luck. I climbed back over the side and got back into the boat looking for something I might use to cut the pants away. Finally I found a rusty knife in a toolbox. I could hardly work for looking for the ship to see if I could see the signal light. I did not, so I dove back in with the knife and started cutting on anything that felt and looked like a rag. Finally I had cut and pulled enough pieces from the shaft and propeller to think it would start. I got back aboard as fast as I could after pitching the knife back over into the boat. I was now quite nervous, as it was getting later and later and we were drifting farther and farther away from the ship.

Any other time there would have been many other boats or ships in my drift area, but this time I had seen nothing but a big empty ocean. I started the engine, pulled the lever to forward and away it went. I was so relieved that it ran, thinking how lucky I was, I began to shake again, but this time I think it was a happy shaking. I went to the ship as fast as I could and tied up to the rope ladder that had been left hanging overboard. The Port Commander soon came down. I had left the engine running and we headed for the beach. I didn't mention what had happened, he then asked why my pants were wet, I told him I had taken a dip while he was gone. We barely made it back before dark. I think this trip made me think, I wasn't so happy with this job anyway. I would soon go on a larger tug boat with Joe McAleer and Warren Breneman again.

Before I would start working on the tug boats again, I would take the Port Commander to one of the ships again late one afternoon. I must have waited for at least four hours tied up to the ship while he was aboard. When he did come down the rope ladder and onto my boat it was getting very late and I would have to take him as near to his quarters as possible. This was taking me quiet a distance from my barge. We were not allowed to have any lights on the barge at night, neither could I run with any light. I knew I would have to follow the coastline in a northern direction, while looking for a cove-like body of water where the barge was located. I also knew Japanese ground troops were

still in control of land north of where the barge was located. I was traveling as fast as I dared, especially at night. Finally I saw a break in the shoreline, as if it may be the inlet I was looking for. I slowed down, trying to detect the barge. I practically stopped. I then saw a light, which appeared to be a flashlight. I thought my people were trying to guide me in. I then yelled, "Robert Pannell, is that you?" No answer. The light went out, I am getting more frightened by the second. I am thinking, "should I try to back up and get out of here as fast as I can?" I call " Robert Pannell" one more time. No answer, and no light. I started backing out some, so as to be able to turn and head back into the Gulf. As soon as I was able to turn the boat heading away, I did and opened the throttle wide open going back in the direction of which I had come. As soon as I had reached enough distance to feel out of gunshot range, I slowed down again and started once again looking for the barge. After traveling maybe four to five miles, staying as close to the shore as possible, I located the barge. I had overshot the barge, and I will never know who could have waved me in with a light? I then, and still believe, some Japanese troops tried to lure me in close enough that they could get possession of the boat. I have often wondered why they did not shoot?

I do not remember when Joe McAleer was promoted as skipper of a 75 foot tug boat. I had previously worked on the same boat when Sergeant James Smith was the skipper. I now believe Sergeant Smith had been sent to **Okinawa**, on the invasion there. On the boat with Joe was Warren Breneman, who was first-mate and another soldier by the name of Schwartz, I do not remember his first name. In all, we had about ten men. On this boat we had a galley below deck, we also had sleeping quarters below deck. This tug boat being much larger than the 45 foot tugs, required an engineer present in the engine room at all times. The controls in the pilot house did not control the engine's operation. The skipper could only send a visual and audio message to the engineer, requiring the engineer to perform the engine speed, as well as stopping and starting. This engine was directly connected to the propeller shaft, requiring that the engine would have to be completely stopped, the camshaft would have to be reconnected to different cams and the engine started back up in a reverse direction to make it run backward, and/or forward. This would require much more time in maneuvering the boat while handling barges or whatever. I thought I would like the job as engineer, and I tried it. Although after a week or so I could see that I **did not** like it. The part that I disliked most was not being able to see where we were going, or know what was happening, especially when the skipper was changing signals from **forward** to **astern,** back and forth. If I would have been on deck, I would have seen the reason for these conditions, though being below and not being able to see anything but the engine room, I thought the worse.

After we had heard about the struggle to capture Manila by the ground troops (it had taken 30 days after they had reached the outskirts of town), we would realize how lucky we were to be in the Lingayen Gulf working with tug boats. The U. S. ground troops were fighting so hard to free the U. S. and Filipino prisoners of the famous **Bataan Death March.** These men had been captured since April, 1942. Thousands of the

Americans and Filipino troops that had been captured at Bataan died during, or shortly after this march. The Japanese soldiers had forced these prisoners to walk 65 miles and carry what possessions they allowed them to keep with little food or water. If one fell out and could not get up, he was killed on the spot. (As I said, after the war one of these prisoners would be my next door neighbor). **This entire land campaign in the recapture of the Philippines would cost the United States 10,380 killed, 36,631 wounded and 93,400 sick or accidentally injured**.

Things were now looking up, we had found out that the Navy would give us monthly rations by going to a Navy Distribution Warehouse and giving our tug boat number. Our Army Supply Sergeant did not know this, so we continued to draw our rations from the Army also. These rations consisted of one case of beer, one carton of cigarettes per. person, as well as food supplies for ten persons. We were getting the same from the Army, though the Navy food supplies were much better. The ones who did not smoke (like myself) would sell our cigarettes for twenty dollars pr. carton. We were now able to have parties for a few days after each monthly ration. We still had no ice, so the beer had to be drank hot, yet after one or two cans it made very little difference.

Our crew got along very good, we enjoyed the work and most of all we enjoyed being together. We had been to town and had met some Philippine girls who would do our laundry. We had also met Philippine men who would buy our cigarettes. I do not remember how much we would pay for our laundry, it wasn't very much because the people were very poor, their money was no good, the Japanese money was no good and everyone now wanted American money. The Japanese soldiers had taken any food the Philippine farmers had raised, or any live stock they had. They had even taken the water-buffaloes, of what the Philippine farmers used to harvest their rice with.

It was an extremely happy moment when we heard that **General Eisenhower had accepted the unconditional surrender from Germany on May 8, 1945**. We would also hear that UA troops from Europe would come to the Pacific to add firepower on Japan. We would hear about **President Roosevelt dying** at Warm Springs, Georgia, and also hear that the **Vice President, Harry S. Truman, had taken over the Presidency**.

Later in August we would also hear about the atomic bomb being dropped on **Hiroshima.** I am quiet sure we did not hear, or could have believed, the destruction that it had produced. Although we were now feeling more positive about the war ending and going home earlier than previously expected. Soon we would hear about the second bomb dropped on **Nagasaki**. This was about all we would think about and talk about.

Soon after these occurrences, when working one day on the tug boat, we would hear ships start blasting their horns, at first we did not know what could be going on? Then even more distant ships would add even more horn blowing. I believe we pulled along-side a ship nearby to ask what this was all about? Then some sailor yelled to us over a loud speaker that the **WAR WAS OVER**. I do not remember exactly what we then did,

what ever it was it was done during some happy moments. Then we would read on the bulletin board where **General MacArthur had accepted the formal surrender from the Emperor of Japan on August 15, 1945**.

I do not remember how it came about, though I was assigned to one of the 45 foot tug boats as skipper. A sergeant who had been on the boat as engineer would stay on with me and work as deck-hand and engineer. One other GI, who was a PFC, would be the other deck-hand. I was still a PFC. (All ranks had been frozen for more than a year, meaning you could work on any job, regardless of the established rank, yet continuing with your rank before the freeze.) So I would be in charge of the boat, the assignment of work, and any such duties as a PFC. I really enjoyed the work, enjoyed taking the responsibility and enjoyed working with the two men on board. We would be very busy moving barges, moving floating cranes and assisting ships during anchorage. The Gulf was more busy now as more supplies were being brought in to support the Occupational Troops arriving.

We would hear that the United States would have 6,000,000 troops to transport back to the good old U. S. A. and a **point system** would be used to determine who would be first. It would work by assigning so many points pr. month overseas, so many points if the person was married, and so many for each dependent. Now the big talk going around would be, when are you, or I, going home? I remember we had a **Sgt. Doyal**, who was a Mason and he would attend Mason meetings. Also belonging to the Masons and attending these meetings were some high ranking officers. Every time Sgt. Doyal would come back from a meeting he would enlighten us on when troops would be leaving with a certain number of points. And sure enough he would be right. The older troops belonging to our company were beginning to get their orders and leaving. One day while Sgt. Doyal was in the tent, a Chief Warrant Officer, who was now our CO, came into the tent and asked Sgt. Doyal, "how many points did he have," then asking, "when will I be leaving?" Sgt. Doyal told him, "you will probably be the last one left to give the key to the Occupational Troops." The CO walked out without saying a word. No one would know when they would actually be leaving, he might know it could be any time, but not to the day. It got to the point where we were sending a few men out every week. I remember one good friend of all the other close friends of mine, was having his own good-by party, he had heard that he would be leaving any time now. (When a person had been notified to stay right in camp, turning in any items not allowed to be taken home, and having his bag packed, he would know it could be any minute.) His name was **Robert Swain**, he had bought some hot beer from somewhere and was drunk as he could be. Some more of his friends and I were in the tent with him when a runner came in and asked who PFC Robert Swain was? He answered, and the runner told him to be ready in ten minutes to be picked up. Swain told him "he was crazy, and he was not going anywhere." We started telling him that it was true and he must be ready. I can't remember how far it got before we would take him out to the shower and put him under it, trying to bring him to reality. Nothing seemed to work, so we started putting his things into his barracks bag and helping him get dressed. When a jeep and driver

arrived for him, we had to actually put his bag in the jeep, practically carry him to the jeep and put him in. We were waving good-bye to him and he was waving back.

We went back to finish off whatever amount of beer was left and talking about the ordeal when we heard a vehicle pull up and start blowing its horn. We ran out of the tent, and there was the jeep and Swain. The driver said that after they were on their way Swain came to realize that he was actually leaving, and would not see us again. He had to get out of the jeep and give us a big hug. They then drove off with him waving back to us. It was quiet a moving experience. Swain was from **Paducah, KY**. and I have never seen or heard from him since. We had such good times together and I have thought of him so many times. So many of us left without exchanging addresses, thinking we would get some personnel paper with each person's name and address, though it never happened. Probably one of the reasons was that there was no **copy-machines** then, and to do this would have taken someone to type all this, using two to three at the most carbon copies. Then to do this over and over until you would have enough carbon copies to hand out to each person, and we are talking about two to three hundred copies. We should have gone to each person and exchanged names and addresses with each person. Hind-sight is easy. Sometimes I think it was due to all of us thinking, we can do it later, not knowing how late it was already.

The majority of us troops were about the same age and without a family, therefore we would have the same, or nearly the same number of points. So when we would hear that we would be leaving soon, many of us would leave together. And our leaving would wipe out the original 375th Harbor Craft Company. As the points dropped to the point where so many of us would be leaving soon, replacements started arriving. I know that I was called into the office and talked to about re-enlistment and returning back to the same job with the Occupational Army Force. They promised me that I could take leave home and come back as a Staff Sergeant. I am sure that others were offered these conditions also. At that time they were wasting their time. I could not even visualize returning there for another two years.

The replacements coming in to man our boats were none less than Staff Sergeants, Master Sergeants and Lieutenants. We could not believe it. I remember the one who came to skipper my tug boat was a Master Sergeant, he could not believe we had PFCs operating tug boats. Another PFC who had been the skipper on another tug boat for about nine months was giving up his boat to a Lieutenant. Before this boy left, the Lieutenant asked him if he would give some OJT before leaving? The PFC looked at him and said, "if I had your bar (insignia), I would be ashamed to ask a PFC for instructions." The PFC picked up his possessions and walked off the tug. We who had been operating these boats, as PFCs, felt both good and bad. We felt good that we had been capable of doing the job, and bad that we had not received fair rank and money for doing it.

Around the end of November, most of my friends and I would get our orders to **go**

home! We were some happy people. We would leave our camp late in the evening, get on some trucks, and head for a staging camp near Manila. It would be night when we arrived. The staging area camp was right near the docks where the troop ships would dock. I remember a sergeant would direct us to tents of which had empty cots to sleep on. He was able to get about half in one tent, with the rest of the men, except me, in the next tent. He then started looking for a place for me. He told me to wait while he went into a tent with his flashlight. He came back out and told me there was one cot vacant. It was so dark I could hardly find it. I was very tired, so I sat my bag down and lay down on the cot, falling asleep very soon. The next morning when I woke up, it was very light with the sun already up. I could not believe my eyes, the men who had not already gone to chow were black. I had never slept, or been around black people this close before. I lay there quiet a while, thinking more white soldiers would start coming in soon. Any and all the soldiers who came back in were black. This was a new experience for me.

I soon got up, put my clothes on and went to the mess tent, wanting something to eat and also to see if any of my friends were there. I was missing my friends. I did not know what tent they had slept in, and everywhere I looked were tents and more tents. I soon saw some of them and once I got food on my tray I went to the nearest table to be close to them. I remember I found a cot in the same tent that Warren Breneman was in and once I went and got my gear, I moved in with my friends again.

All announcements would come over the loud speaker system, and notices would be posted on the bulletin board. We had about four things to do there, one was to read the bulletin board, second was to listen to announcements, third was to go for chow, fourth was to sleep. We had been told that the next ship may come in at any time, and if you were not present when called, they could not guarantee when you might go home. I do not know how much other people slept, but I do know Breneman and I got to the point where we could sleep all the time, other than the time it took us to eat and to go to the out-house. There was no place near the camp that you could walk to, there were no books, magazines, or recreation area, nothing at all to do where you could still hear the loud speakers, so we just lay and slept. We would be here through Christmas, with a total of thirty days before getting aboard the ship for home. I guess this was the most well behaved, large group of men I can ever remember being around for thirty days. I wonder why? I do not believe we had any mail service during this period.

I could hardly believe we were actually going home, even after boarding the troop ship again. The trip back would be much quicker, we would not have to zig-zag this time avoiding enemy submarines as before. Again Breneman, McAleer, and Pannell would go on top-side and play cards each day. I would come up with them, but play cards very little due to **sea sickness again**. I do not remember being as sick as I had been during the trip over, although I would not have many days without some seasickness. One night I went up to the main deck where a movie was being shown on the fantail. There were no seats, everyone had to sit on the deck, usually sitting on our life jacket. I sat down

near the port side near the guard railing. About half way through the movie it started raining so hard you could hardly see. There was nothing to get under, other than to go to the stairway leading to the sleeping quarters below. I believe everyone there headed to the stairway at once, and there was a lot of men aboard. With everyone pushing and shoving, I was forced to the side of the ship further and further. There were two horizontal chains keeping me from going right overboard. I finally locked my arms around one of the chains hoping I could hang on in case I was forced any further. I was yelling at the people pushing against me, but they were being pushed just as I was. **I really believed for a time that I actually would be pushed overboard**. Finally the pressure lightened up as more and more of the people made their way down the stairways.

As we were getting near **San Francisco**, we were ordered to report to our quarters for roll call and to stand by for further orders on debarkation. We had missed seeing the Golden Gate Bridge on our return, due to being below deck. We would feel the ship working its way in for docking, and then being tied-up. We would later find out that three army troops were missing. We would never find out whether they had fallen overboard, or were maybe missing when boarding. I would think that the roll calls after boarding would have proven whether they were missing when boarding. Though after my experience on troop ships, I can easily believe how easy it was to fall overboard and no one witness it, especially at night.

We had been told that when arriving in the U.S.A. each GI would receive a **steak** dinner. It being night, we thought we had missed ours. We had debarked and were loaded into trucks, to be carried to some Army camp. I do not remember where it was, it could have been Camp John T. Knight? Anyway we were marched to a mess hall, even though it was late at night we were going to be fed. I remember the men working in the mess hall were **German Army Prisoners**. I don't remember if they asked us if we wanted our steak or not, though I do remember eating one. I don't remember which I enjoyed the most, the steak, or the milk. If you had not tasted milk in eighteen months, you would probably realize how good a glass of cold milk would taste. That was the first glass of milk we had drank since leaving California, for eighteen month. Regardless of how late it was, we thoroughly enjoyed it. That was also the first meat we had eaten since leaving California. We had eaten turkey on Christmas. The German prisoners all looked healthy and content. Maybe they realized how lucky they had been, by being taken by American Troops, rather than by Russian Troops.