

Operation Tiger and D-Day

Now, "Operation Tiger" is in motion, a practice maneuver with troops on ships in the English Channel. German torpedo ships came out of Cherbourg and torpedoed our ships, and sunk about three or four. But my ship did not get hit. I didn't know what was going on. What the big fuss was all about. But I could see bodies floating around in the ocean. Nobody was picking anybody up. I don't know why. We lost about 800 men there on this maneuver. They sent us back to camp and we were not allowed to talk about it at all. That was called "Eisenhower's greatest kept secret." You weren't allowed to talk about it in chow line. You weren't allowed to talk to any civilians. Wherever you were, you were not allowed to say one word about it.

But they kept us training, kept us training, until June. Then they started loading the boats up. It was about June 3rd when they loaded us on buses to go to the ships to go to France. These buses we were in, the people did not have any gas so they made steam engines out of them. They had the furnace in the back of the bus to heat the logs burning all the time. Well, my bus did not have enough power to go up the hills so we had to walk up the steep hills and then get back in the bus. When we finally got to the harbor we were all marching to get on the ships. The women and children were there waving and shouting, "God bless you Yanks!" "God bless you Yanks!" A whole bunch of them. "God bless you Yanks!" So we got on the ships and had to sit there, maybe a day or two before we started over. We didn't quite get started right away, but other ships did and they had to come back because the weather was bad. So we had to stay in the harbor another day. We were supposed to go over on the 4th I think, but we ended up going over on June 6th.

So we went on June 6th. We crossed that ocean and it was pretty rough because we had storms. Bad storms they had. We were crossing and all these guys are getting sick. They were on the ship and they were sick. When we got close to Normandy we climbed down the side of the ship on nets into Higgin's Boat landing crafts. When the Higgin's Boats filled up they would pull out into the ocean and circle around until we all lined up. In the boat I was on, a lot of these guys were sick and vomiting, puking on the floor. The boats lined up to go straight

onto the beach of Normandy. On the way in, those guys were sick and were not fit for combat. But they had to do it anyway. In my brigade there wasn't a bad guy there. They would do it if it killed them. One of the G.I.s was so sick he vomited right in the officer's face. Someone took off his helmet, filled it with water, and threw it right into the officer's face. Now, when we got over there in the early morning they dropped the ramp. I was standing about five feet back in the middle, on the left side of the boat. I could see the gate going down and the Germans shooting at us with their machine guns. They were hitting those guys and wiping them out. I didn't think going out the front of the Higgin's boat was a good idea, so I climbed over the side. I jumped in the water about up to my chest. And when I got into that water I kept going in, going in, until I could walk a little bit. Then I started running and running until I finally got to the beach. Some of the guys were trying to ride the waves into the beach.