

LE HARVE, FRANCE

day 12

As the LCT drew nearer to the continent of Europe at Le Harve, France, in the late morning of Monday, March 5, the Channel became more calm. The rain had subsided at some point during the early morning although no one had really noticed.

The activity of the twelve-man LCT Mark V crew alerted the soldiers that they must be drawing nearer the land. The docks at Le Harve were almost always a bee-hive of activity. There were so few low-rising docks that seldom was there an opening left for the arrival of one lone LCT. So considering the intended purpose and capabilities of the craft, it was common, and very easy, for the commander of the LCT simply to run the craft aground in an open area on shore, lower the front ramp, and let the payload of men wade through the cold shallow water and up onto dry land. And this commander did just that.

After the men assembled on shore, with Melvin somewhere near the center of the assembly, they were led up a small incline to a waiting canteen truck where they were offered hot coffee and donuts to help ward off their chill and bring them back to life after the long cold crossing. It wasn't much of a meal considering they had gone with-

out breakfast, but having gone without food for the past 20 hours or so, they were grateful to be given anything to eat.

The day still far from over, the large groups were separated into smaller groups of 24 or so and loaded onto open-topped GMC personnel carriers. Once the muddy olive-green truck was loaded with all the men it could carry, it was unceremoniously pushed into forward gear, and with a tremendous jerk, it pulled away.

Even though the men stood erect like match sticks in a box, there was barely room for all of them, and certainly no room for comfort. When the call of nature would hit a soldier, the entire group would collectively shift positions to get him to the outside of the stand of match sticks in order to relieve himself over the side of the truck. There was no stopping for anyone's personal needs.

They were now on their way via a rutted, muddy, potholed road to Luxembourg, some 200 miles due east.