

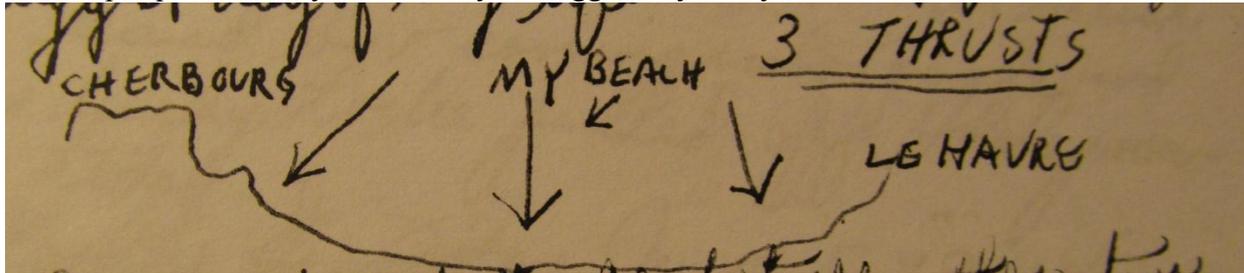
June 1944 and the Adventures of PC 553

Thursday June 1, 1944

A new month and I bet a historic one. We are escorting some LCT's to Portland where eventually we'll jump off for the invasion. It's a nice day and we have left Portsmouth until after invasion days a lot of water will be under us by then and we'll have seen more implements of war than most men, rockets, mines, torpedoes, guns, planes, gas, they expect gas and we are set on it. It will be a tough thing until we get the upper hand and I see it all from 1500 yds. off the beach, of all places to be We are at Portland tied up alongside the PA 26 the Samuel Chase a transport. This is where the heavy stuff is now. 2 battleships are here and a mob of U.S. destroyers. This next week we'll see about everything. Tied up for the night now.

Friday June 2, 1944

Still at Portland and I know for sure that this is the real thing. We are to be 4,000 yds. off the beach in the first assault. Can you think of a worse spot to be leading the first wave of this big push in. Cold weather here again. The officers have the map of the beach we are to hit but we aren't told a thing until we start across. Today I saw where we are to land in France – the exact spot, the first wave, 4,000 yds. from the beach. The soldiers were paid today in French money Francs (2 cents). The transports are loading it's only a matter of a few days now. Everyone has the jitters because this is it. Imagine the officers and I are the only ones that know the exact spot. I have to because of radar recognition. My feelings are like the time before the kickoff only more so. We are in Section "O" going in on beach "B." We have been sent to Poole [a town east of Portland] for the night & are tied up now. Our last chance for a good night sleep and its 1:30 as we tie up. I pick Tuesday for "D" Day the biggest day of my life.



The invasion spot all [are] between these two points Cherbourg and Le Havre. Portland where we just were was bombed the last 4 out of 7 nights – we probably missed it tonight. What a tense nervous life this is now and most of us have the jitters – we all know this is it.

Saturday June 3, 1944

We'll be at Poole all day. I guess we'll all sleep. We are outside the harbor now with some LCT's & rocket ships will be here tonight. We've spent our last night in port until after "D" Day, I think. [Illegible] (1st class) was just called to the wardroom & got the dope. "D" Day is Monday, June 5, 1944. "H" hour is 610 in the morning. We PC 553 get 4,000 yards from the beach at 0500 and sit there one hour while they bomb the beach and shell it. We have to knock out an enemy pillbox on the beach and direct the waves as they come in. Out of the 14,000 ships in the U.S. Navy I am on the one that precedes everything to the beach by one whole hour. Sitting all alone waiting for the waves. Battleships start shelling at 40 minus "H" hour and stop 5 minutes before the 1st wave hits the beach. We also have to sneak through 1,000 yards of mined water. We will be at our position for 13 hours and an SC will relieve us then we go out behind the transports that are 10 miles out & screen them with destroyers, cruisers (etc.) the biggest job being over. That's the dope. The allied planes have white lines painted under them for identification. We're all nervous now it seems you age 5 years. My thoughts are of my Marcy and my little son who I hope will look this over with me some day. Marcy you made me so

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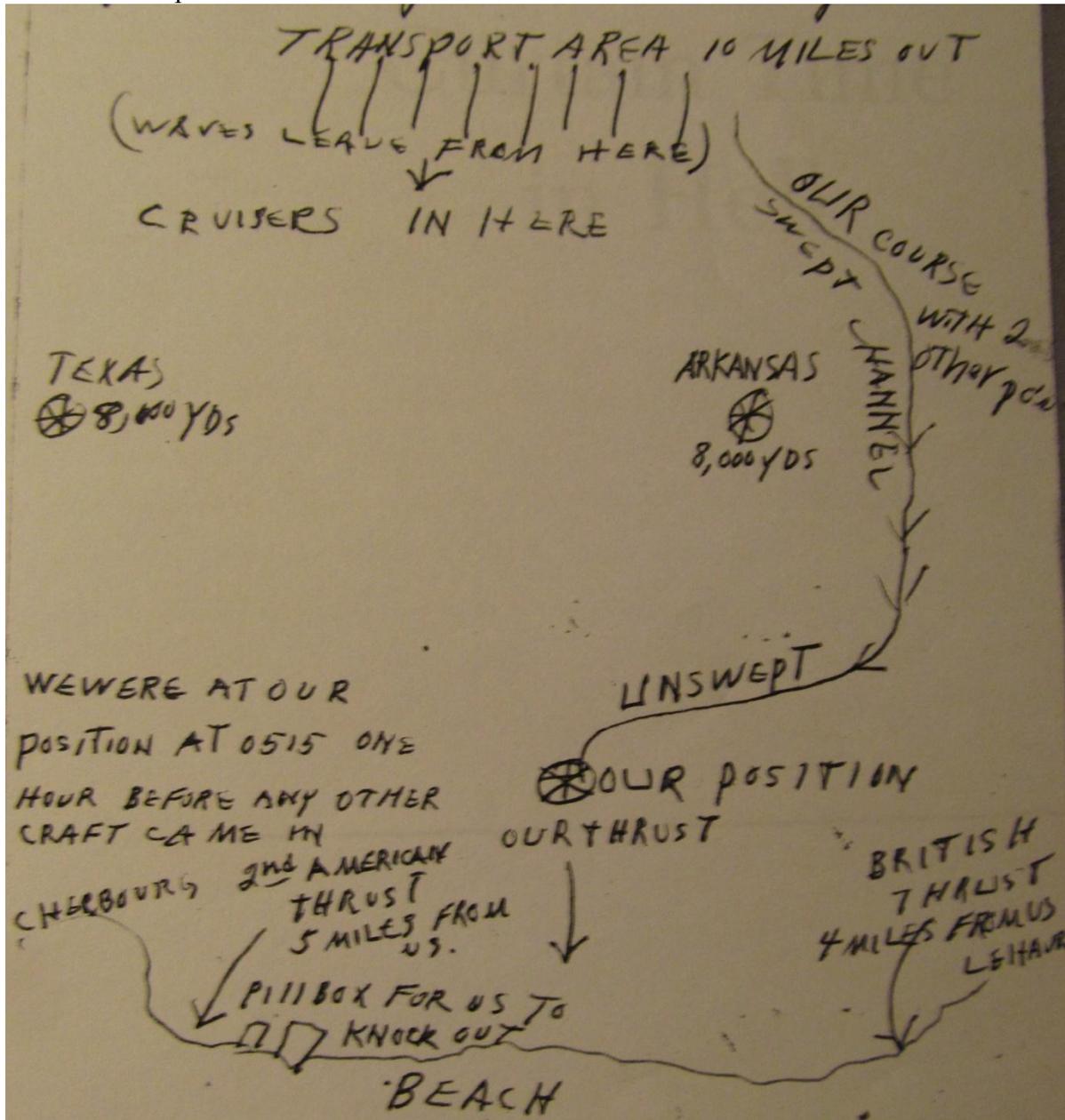
happy and the best girl in the world. I love you so dearly & have been so true & legal to you.
Want to fool, hon?

Sunday June 4, 1944

"D" Day has been postponed 24 hours because of rough weather. Tuesday is now "D" Day. This is agony for everyone being all set to go. Back into Poole now [Poole has a protected harbor] and were lucky to be pulled off Holiday row time today.

Monday June 5, 1944

Underway for France. What a bunch of ships. "D" Day is tomorrow morning. Pretty nervous now. Sea is kind of rough. We are no half way across the Channel heading for the invasion beaches. Pretty rough. We get there at 0300 and "H" hour is at 0630. That is the time the 1st wave hits the beach. We are 4,000 yds. from the beach at 0515 on hour ahead of any other ship. Here's the setup:



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Thirty miles more to the beaches. You seem to age 5 yrs. But I'm not so worried now.

D-Day Tuesday June 6, 1944. "H" hour at 0630. The day the world is waiting for is here and it's rough and cold as we get to the transport area 12 miles from the invasion beaches. We are proceed to our position 4000 yards from our beach (Easy Red Beach). We are almost ready to go. This is where you get nervous. We are now in position and our Air Force is bombing the beaches like you've never seen. The flak is flying up and so far two of our boys have gone down. Now the bombing has stopped and the beaches are hidden by smoke. Now our ship is firing on a German pillbox and have hit it seven times. Our whole bombardment has started, cruisers, battleships, tin cans, rocket ships, tanks from LCT's everything. The beaches are a mass of smoke. To the battleship Arkansas we owe our life. A shore battery hit on three sides of us 50 yards away and the Arkansas wheeled her 12 inch around and one salvo blew the Heinie's to bits. We were lucky. Being in the front line we were right in the Heinie's sights. Our sea bombardment have all the enemies heavy stuff spotted and how they think they are knocking them out. Now our infantry are coming in and we are being control vessel for this beach area and sending them in. LCT's and LCI's are coming in now too. A fellow on an LCM stopped by and said that our first wave in was annihilated by German crossfire as soon as the ramps went down but now we are getting in. The whole world is going crazy here now at "H" hour.. We are picking men out of the water like flies mostly soldiers. We have Gen. Weiman [possibly General Willard G. Wyman, assistant division commander, 116th Infantry] onboard now, the headman here so far, and some colonels and majors sizing up the situation before they go in. Our men are advancing now and the waves are piling in. Our job is to send in the stuff the beach master asks for. The German mortar fire is holding our men on the beaches. Mortar fire is terrible. It's a little later now and we are doing okay. Our PC has been one of the busiest ships here sending in this and that etc. and the general staff recommended us highly. The other PCs have sat quiet and were done about the whole job of controlling. It is D-Day night now and it is just getting dark. The German obstacles in the water have held up our landings awfully. The fighter screen over us is marvelous. We had just been bombed by the Luftwaffe and shot down four out of six. What flak this armada put up. The absence of German planes is so noticeable. The Heinie planes have gone down now and you can see the bombs that are Air Force are dropping on the Le Havre and Cherbourg. What a blasting. We have gotten by okay so far and have we sweated.

Wednesday June 7, 1944

We started this morning at 0400 with an air raid on us and a U.S. destroyer blew a German E boat to bits with one blast just off to our port side. Our supplies are going in fast & men & tanks. Our destroyers are laying 50 yds. off the beach knocking out German mortar fire which is very heavy. Our cruisers and battleships are knocking out German control towers further away [from] what gunnery we have. Our destroyers have showed the way and they go everyplace right into the beach hitting all the Heinie nests and we are pretty well cleaned up. Our mean have penetrated way in. General Bradley, the head Infantry man, has landed now. Admiral Ramsey and General Eisenhower are 100 yds. to our port side and I can see him with my glasses as plain as day. Eisenhower is laughing now. They are on Ramsey's flagship and are now going aboard our cruiser Augusta. It is now 9:30 at night and we have just been shelled from a German long range gun but our spotters relayed to the battleships and we were shelled no more. We have such marvelous shooting. So far we've been shelled, bombed, E-boated but have beaten it all off. We've lost hardly no ships except landing stuff on the beaches. I've seen about 20 planes shot down/ No German planes around at all only at night. Big convoys are pulling in now loaded

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down and we are sending everything in and have advanced 20 miles. The British assault further up the coast to our left is going good as is the other American landing to our right.

Thursday June 8, 1944

Today at 0145 we were bombed by the Luftwaffe again as there [are] hundreds of ships here waiting to unload etc. They were driven off now by the heaviest flak you could ever see. Stibula and I were on a 20 mm with the Heinies right over us and we were both flat on our backs pointing the gun up. Hundreds upon hundreds of our bombers passed over when it was light today and are bombing in the rear of the Germans. We are well screened in the day here but at night our fighters have to scam because we can't see who they are and might shoot them down so that's why the Luftwaffe sneaks in. There was this steeple in a small town inland a bit that had German fire control there directing fire to their men. Our sea bombardment left it alone being a church until one of our spotters saw there was activity there. A U.S. destroyer wheeled around and with one salvo blew the steeple sky high. I had my glasses on it at the time. Then the Arkansas laid a salvo in and finished it up. There have been plenty of that stuff going on but now we are pretty well set up and what stuff is coming in even floating drydocks they are making a harbor here. Soon we'll be leaving for convoying duty across the channel, I hope. It is pretty tense here especially at night. I think of what Marcy would feel like if she ever could have seen me when we came in on D Day the first ship in right off the beach. We had to be 1st in so the waves could see us and head in the right section though the smoke & fire was so high. We've been recommended for the best control PC here. We certainly did our job great & knocked out a pillbox to boot. We've all been scared some. I hope we can get to convoying soon and get to England for mail so I can send a telegram. I had the baby's booties tied to my life jacket throughout all so far and they are now grimy and still on. They were just hanging there and I had Marcy's picture in my pocket along with the baby's. They are still in my pocket and are crushed and they stay there till I get out of the beach here to safety then I'll put them in my locker. That's the dope so far up to Thursday night at 6 o'clock. Lots of bombardments tonight. Lots of our heavy stuff is getting ashore now. The whole sea here is a mass of all kinds of ships.

Friday June 9, 1944

I'm married 25 months today but what a different setting it is right now at 0100 as usual the Germans bombed us but were driven off with the most terrific barrage of flak you could ever imagine. We were in the middle of it and it was a solid mass of flak like walls all around. Cruisers, shore batteries, all kinds of ships, let go. We've lost no ships here. It's amazing. We could see our boys bombing Cherbourg and Le Havre all night. They are building a harbor here now, quite a big one sinking Liberty Ships as the sea wall. Lots of activity. The hospital ship Prague [verified by a Google Search at Normandy] is here now anchored. The weather has been continually cold. We got 3 more planes here last night in the raid. Reports say last night's raid had 60 Heinies planes and our ships were also attacked by E-boats. It was the hottest night yet.

Saturday June 10, 1944

1st airfield in since 1940 in France. Johnny Jr.'s 3 month birthday was celebrated here with the busiest hours yet outside of "H" hour. We went to General Quarters six times and had six raids. Bombs were falling pretty close to our ship and the flak was terrific. We picked shrapnel off of the deck this morning. We didn't sleep at all last night. They are trying to keep us up and wear us down. E-boats were active also. Everything breaks out at night here in this basin. Got six planes last night. They put up some walls of flak here. We are still just off the beach with hundreds of merchant ships and battle forces. The nights are something wicked here, but to get home to Marcy I can take anything the Heinie's throw. We are no longer [a] control vessel here and could

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probably be on patrol or convoy now. It is later day no and the weather is still the worst in the world cold & cloudy – good night weather for the Luftwaffe. [illegible] Our fighters rule the sky. I saw the first plane land on our airstrip in France since 1940.

Sunday June 11, 1944

Still just off the beach one mile for the 6th straight day. This morning at 0345 our air raids began and this morning we were dive bombed which is tough on anyone. Our fighters screen the outside of us at night but can't come over us as we'd shoot them down. We've had just about 25 raids in 5 nights but this was the worst. Those bombs don't look so nice. 5 general quarters last night – we only sleep in the day. How I'd like to get back to England just for one letter and to relax for a night. When I get away from this suicide spot I'll bow my head to no one. Tonight for the first night yet we didn't have an air raid it was so miserable out. You'd never believe this cold June weather. What a relaxation for a night to stay asleep we just can't get over it.

Monday June 12, 1944

One week ago today we were underway heading for here at this time and I'm sure glad this is a week later. Lots of shipping coming in here now you never saw or could believe such an armada of ships possible. The Germans here that are prisoners are dumbfounded by it all too as they harbors being made, bulldozers, tractors and the usual crazy Yank driving. Plenty of soldiers coming in on hundreds of liberty ships too looking at the coast here for the first time. I wonder what they would have thought 6 days ago when we first saw it through bombs and everything else. Our bombers this morning have clouded the sky going to and from to meet the Heinies. C47 transport planes are landing here on our airstrip. I can see them from the harbor here. I wish we could get some mail it's been over two weeks since we got any and the latest news from home is May 18. I know Marcy is worried too. Tonight we had four GQ's the Heinies kept us up all night but we got five tonight how they explode when they hit the ground. In a week here we've had about 50 air raids and got about 25 planes they can't send too many over they have to count their planes now. French people were out paddling around the ships yesterday & we threw them candy and cigarettes. They were all around 2 French Cruisers here the first they've seen since 1940. We've had no mail for going on 3 weeks & have been bombed every night, all around all you see at night is bomb flashes, floods to see E-boats by, flak and everything else. Our Air Force is doing a wonderful job protecting us except at night when they call and we counted hundreds of bombers going into France every day. The weather is more miserable than the winter at home. We've seen the sun one day now since May 26. We've been just 1 mile off the beach here for 8 days now and they better get some mail to us soon – that's what everyone wants. We've certainly seen every phase of this invasion from start to finish and all there is here now is merchant ships all the assault craft have gone back but us & the destroyers and the flagship Augusta. You need a rest after the 8 days but we won't get one for a while yet. We've slept in our clothes for 10 days now and it sure would be great to go one night even without a G.Q. and bombs.

Tuesday June 13, 1944

Another heavy foggy rainy day as usual. No orders yet except to stay here in "bombed haven." Miss the mail awful. Not much doing tonite. Lots of flashes and [illegible] and two shells whistled overhead but it was a quiet night.

Wednesday June 14, 1944

Still just sitting here pretty fair today but we're laying here doing nothing. It's so monotonous. Another big convoy just came in. Each day we say maybe we'll get the next convoy back to England but we don't. Most of them are back on their second trip and we've still have [been] wearing dirty clothes and eating junk. Finished the lay off with an air raid at 1130. I saw a plane

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go into a dive and never come out – it must have went through the water to China and what a roar.

Thursday June 15, 1944

The Heinies really kept us up last night. They lit us all up with flares as though they were looking for something in particular. The flak was terrific and none of the bombs came close last night. What an awful feeling to know they're overhead and you can't see them, but fire and then you see bombs hit on the water. We picked flak & shrapnel off our decks the day after always. We call our tin hats "shrap(nel)" hats and our life jackets "flak jackets." We've pretty much veterans now after having seen it all but our morale is low because of no mail and they still keep us on the beach-head here. This is our tenth day here. Everyone else has been back to England 3 times already. Even the Army here has their mail. This is all today so far. We are now tied up to an LST getting food & water and have had our first shower in 2 weeks. We put our mail aboard her (LST-73) and she will bring it back to England as I guess we are stuck here with no mail. What miserable days these are. It's warm for a change and the sun is out very extraordinary here.

Friday June 16, 1944

Cloudy, rainy, cold as usual. We are still at the beach-head and last night as usual we were raided all night again. 10 days of it now. No mail and no hope of even getting to England – they're sealing us here it seems. Dorn[?] talks of more landing too which isn't good. Why they don't get the mail to us who are still here and need it is beyond me. The ack-ack fire last night was terrific right of us and you could hear the shrapnel pinging on our decks. So ends today.

Saturday June 17, 1944

Just one small raid last night for about half an hour sort of a break to us.. Still at the Normandy beach-head for the 11th straight day and night. Cold, blustery day today as usual. No mail yet either. This invasion is supposed to be a 3 month operation and they are supposed to land a division of men a day for 30 days. I don't know when we'll ever get back to England or get mail or anything. The destroyers, LCT's and PC's are the forgotten guinea pigs. We don't even rush to air raids now the morale is so low because they haven't sent our mail to us a very easy thing to do. I hate just about everything right now after eleven days on this beach-head and eleven air raid nights. The last news I have from home is May 18, and the only thing that keeps my spirits up now is the thoughts of someday getting home to Marcy. The talk of more invasions over here isn't any too heartwarming either right now.

Sunday June 18, 1944

Another cloudy, rotten day here as usual. Planes were over us all night as usual. 3 shot down. Looked like those remote control jobs. The Texas, Nevada, Arkansas, Tuscaloosa & the Quincy are just ½ mile from us here this morning after having been 40 miles down the coast shelling Cherbourg for a week. We will have Cherbourg soon I think a great break for our shipping. We can sent letters out today still no mail in though and everything is terrible. The Heinies really lit us up with flares last night but they didn't get anything. This awful weather ruined our air offensive. Just came back from my first time on French soil on my way to see if we had any mail. I saw some French people who say, "Bon Jour, Monsieur." I also saw some prisoners Hitler's supermen but they were caged in an infield with barbed wire like you see in the movies. What a mess the whole place is but the Americans are clearing it all up making roads everywhere. It is a real busy place [with] dust as thick as a fog. It was quite an experience and I found some pictures on the beach of fellow's wives, girls and letters from men's wives to them. It was tough. I'll take the Navy.

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Monday June 19, 1944

As usual it's rainy, cold, rough and windy the worst day so far. Still anchored here our 15th day out so far as usual we were raided again last night. Wish we could get away from here for even one day where we wouldn't be needed or hear bombs, or big guns. Rough all day 50 mile gale is coming. (D plus 14).

Tuesday June 20, 1944

Raided last night bad as the weather is. This is the 2nd day of this awful storm, we have lost both of our anchors and have to keep moving. After all we've gone through here now we hit a storm like this on top of being dirty, tired, hungry and disgusted. I'll take a big ship any day. We have a hole in the bow, no anchors, bent screws, no water, and no food, and a filthy ship. It's too rough to tie up to an LST to get supplies too.

Wednesday June 21, 1944

Third straight day of the roughest weather we've ever had. Nothing but misery aboard here as we haven't got a thing not even morale. No mail as yet almost a month since we had any.

Thursday June 22, 1944

The storm is still on for the 4th day terribly rough we sure are a beat up crew. Some of the men are taking sick from tension, and nerves. Can't blame them air raids every night, bombs, flares, flak, and those weeks of this now. Almost a month since we have been on shore and on a PC boat it's like a year at sea as we have no recreation and no place to even read or write. Still not mail. Last news I have is May 18. The rotten military rats who are holding it up. I hate them with all my heart. We are going alongside LST 317 for food and water. They are unloading troops and equipment. Bombers by the hundreds are going over today to bomb the Heinies. The weather has cleared. Saw 50 big transport planes go over with something in them maybe paratroopers. The port side of our ship is smashed in from banging against the LST while getting supplies. We got some mail off – they'll be able to mail it in a day or so when they get back to England. What an overhaul we're going to need.

Friday June 23, 1944

Had some good raids last night. Saw a dogfight and our boy shot down the Heinie with about 4 blasts from his guns. It crashed off our starboard beam in the water one Nazi less. Also had a 5 inch shell hit just off our port bow accidentally fired by our own shore guns. How those things whistle by what a sound. We are waiting for orders now from a four stripe on board LCI 87. As usual a old dark day so far. We have Captain Finlay on board now making a tour of the harbor they made here to see what damage the 4 day storm did. Mail just came in up to June 7. Let the Heinies bomb us tonight. Who cares now. Tied up to LST 290 for supplies.

Saturday June 24, 1944

Not much ding last night pretty quiet. Lost another anchor last night and are trying to get another one now. Three of our PC;s went on a commando raid with U.S. Marines to capture a small island radar station on D Day, 1184, 484 and the 1261. They say the 1261 was sunk by gunfire with half the crew killed and all the officers but the Captain. It's a little warmer here today for a change and the sun is actually out. Still standing by here at the beaches. DE 791 hit a mine recently only 20 were rescued and they were injured. (One year ago York Beach, Maine). [DE 791 is an error. The DE that was sunk by 3 mines on June 8, 1944 off of Normandy was DE 695 Rich, which out of a crew of 215, 89 were killed and 73 survivors were wounded. Source: *Destroyer Operations in WW II* by Theodore Roscoe, p. 356 & 357).

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Sunday June 25, 1944

1 year ago Marcy & I were at York Beach, Maine. I was home for 26 days. What a change this year. Today it actually looks nice again. I can hardly believe it. Just met the PC 1225 who we always used to run with and they told us we were reported sunk when they were in Portsmouth after "D" Day and were surprised to see us. Got food and water from LST 157 tonight and we [are] now anchored for the night. We can see them bombing Cherbourg and the German line all along from here way inland.

Monday June 26, 1944

Still here at the Normandy beaches since "D" Day. We've seen the whole show from the first shot on. Like to get back for a rest we all would for a little while. It gets tiresome sleeping in your clothes all the time and seeing bombs & explosions every day & night. We may get back in a few weeks. We don't know. The Heinies were over again last night as they are every night but now we don't go to G.Q. unless it's real hot. To heck with them. We have never seen one in the day. The sky is filled with out planes. Since being here we soon got to know the difference in all planes. Raining again today, we're just anchored. Just got back from up near Cherbourg where our other beach is. They were hit hard there too about 3 sunken ships at the anchorage. I saw about 1,000 Nazi prisoners getting on an LST to go back to England. They were captured from Cherbourg, I think, which is 2/3rds ours today. Another tremendous convoy just pulled in. We are back at our beach now anchored for the night & a real rainy night. One that makes you homesick.

Tuesday June 27, 1944

"D" plus 21 and we are still here at the beaches one of the few ships that haven't left yet even for a day in England. What a difference this 3 weeks has made though. Cherbourg fell at 0700 this morning a great victory here for us. Cold & windy today. The [illegible] here since "D" Day has gone to Cherbourg because they have Admiral Kirk onboard running the show. We're one of the very few ships here since "D" Day now. Captured 60 or 70 thousand men at Cherbourg. Not too many ships here now most are being directed to the big port of Cherbourg. Another day one with here. We're wondering how long [we] will be here at the beach. 3 weeks today we've been here. Most of the PC's here have gotten back to England for a short stay anyhow.

Wednesday June 28, 1944

Still at beach. More action here last night as usual firing, flares, planes. Rumors of a second landing around Brest and I hope not. I wouldn't care to go through this again ever. We expect mail today the major item in the war. Plenty of mail from home today & pictures which are great. We are underway for Utah beachhead 5 miles away. Windy, cold day. George got word today he had a daughter born June 10. That's about all for today here. Stormy again.

Thursday June 29, 1944

We have new duty now. Meeting convoys from England and taking so many ships to their beach, while another PC takes others to their beach. We show them in through the minefields. We operate from the "Capetown" old British cruiser with half American half British crew. Mines are the greatest worry at sea here now. What a punch they pack too. The planes plant them at night. Little warmer today – must be all of 70 degrees. A Nazi plane skimmed right over us last night and we missed him. God food and water today from LST 310. Cloudy as usual. "Hitler weather."

Thursday June 30, 1944

The last day of a miserable month and we are still at Normandy for our 5th week straight at sea. We were sent last night to screen way out in the channel at what is called the Mason and Dixon line for us & the Germans. We're the furthest escort ships out (PC's) even further than the

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destroyers. We're the Guinea Pigs of everything. Screen at night and guide convoys through minefields by day and according to the radio & papers you wouldn't even know we were in the invasion as they mentioned every ship but the PC's. The morale here is very low because of it. Pessimism is very high. We've been a sealed ship for 32 days now and it's awful on a ship this size as destroyers and up have movies, canteens etc. We've had dangerous jobs all along especially since "D" Day and everyone is really tired and wants a rest as most of the ships have been to England for a short while anyway. Last night as usual it was flashes, horrible flak and helpless horrifying feeling of mines, the worst hazard. The mines got three merchant ships and damaged one in a convoy that pulled in yesterday. I can never forget these days here at Normandy and will bow to no one when it comes to seeing actions. The weather as usual is still miserable. We are getting a lot of stuff in today at the beaches, the most ever. I've just seen the greatest armada of planes in history come over, and behind the lines drop their bombs, B17's and B24's heavy stuff. The sky was blotted out from the planes as far as we could see thousands of them. They were back in 15 minutes probably to get another load it looks like a big push. I'm still awed at the amazing sight. How the Heinies must feel they must be bomb happy. What a sight. We were sent out patrolling all night in waters where the Heinies usually drop the mines from planes. It goes from bad to worse for us here it seems as though our own side wants to knock these ships off with the suicidal missions and yet you wouldn't know we'd been in the invasion. We got by the night OK with the gift of God that's all.