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Le Harve France and My Personal Walk Through History

Sunday, May 03, 2015

Although not a typical tourist destination, this city had special significance to me. It was about an hour's drive east of the D-Day beaches.

This is Le Harve in 1945. Located at the mouth of the Seine, a major port for centuries, it was heavily bombed during WWII.



The war caused major destruction to the port facilities and buildings of the city.



That's my Dad on the right. Serving in the Navy, he took a lot of pictures once the shores were secure. He also kept a diary which I only discovered 10 years after his death.

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During our travels I try to visit the places he walked during the war.
This is LeHarve today – once again a major port and industrial city.



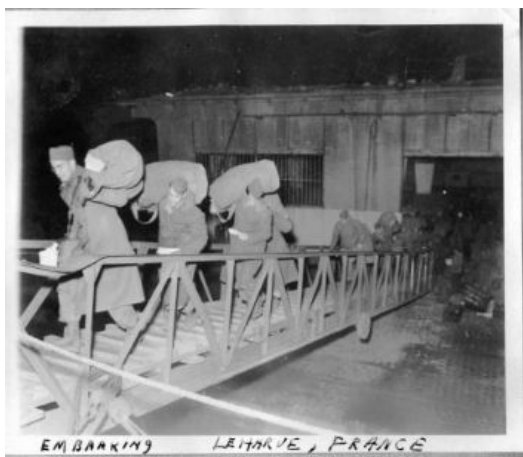
The cathedral was restored in 1974. Dad has a photo of a bombed church, but it's impossible to tell if it's this one.



This plaque at the very end of the wharf is a memorial to the reason my Dad was here. After the surrender, our warships were refitted as troop carriers to bring the soldiers home - Operation Magic Carpet. 675,000 men left from this port.



Dad recorded that event too





TIARD & SEA SICK



MID-ATLANTIC BRINGING HOME TROOPS FROM FRANCE

I still have the camera Dad took along with him. He was the youngest of 4 brothers to serve in WWII. His brothers in the army and marines already serving in Europe and the Pacific told him to join the Navy instead.

All 4 survived the war.

Note: Thanks to Teri-rific for pointing out my transposition of letters. With all the photos I took how could I not notice that it's Le Havre not Le Harve?

She understood completely. My only connection with the city was my Dad's WWII pictures and HE reversed the letters. So 70 years later I did too even though I saw the correct spelling all day.



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CD9234910

What a treasure to have these memories from your father during WWII... and how wonderful that all 4 sons survived!
Indeed, it is Le Havre not Le Harve (easier to pronounce too I think!).

2150 days ago



MARYJEANSL

This is so neat - that your father left you such a record of his own story. I only wish my father had done that. He never talked about the war - not any war - with his kids, although my mother did tell us one story he had told her. He fought in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

2227 days ago



JAMIRBLAZE

Thank you for sharing your family history! Very interesting and great photos.

2229 days ago



WATERMELLEN

What a wonderful way to honour your father.

He would be so touched to know that you followed in his footsteps and visited the places he had documented . . .

How marvellous that all four brothers survived.
2230 days ago



TERI-RIFIC

Those are amazing pictures. What a treasure to have as a memory of your father-and what a legacy to have left these records. The diary must be amazing. You both transposed letters in Le Havre.

2230 days ago



JANETRW50

Thanks so much for giving us a tour. My dad was in the Pacific in the army and my uncle was in the Pacific in the Navy but he was a gunner. He did not return. There is a marker for him in Punchbowl in Hawaii. A beautiful place to visit as well.

2230 days ago



LIVEDAILY

What a way to retrace history, and with such special significance!!



2230 days ago



MJREIMERS


I am so glad that your father and all his brothers came home safely. Thank you so much for the blog and pictures. I love history! My oldest son was obsessed with anything WWII for years. It's such an important time in our history. We can only hope we learned from the lessons of the past.

2230 days ago



CD4114015

Took me all day to get to this....been a super busy time this year gotta get as many steps in before my next surgery as I can....LOVE, love, love this blog! John and I are SO proud of our servicemen today and from all time...we would NOT be here but for them....and to your dad and

mine. How  to have been where they actually stood themselves!



2230 days ago



WALLAHALLA




2230 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

What an uplifting time: when the soldiers could all come home. Thanks for sharing so richly

the past / present photos side by side!
2230 days ago 



PHOENIX1949

My father also was 1 of 4 brothers who served and all made it home. I have my grandmother's star pins (original one with 3 stars & later one with 4 stars when another son enlisted).





All of our troops, past and present, are priceless to this country and it's a shame that this consensus is not felt by many.

When going through papers from our parents' estate in 2012, I came across a statement about Dad's World War II military service that he wrote to be read at his funeral (1997). Better late than never!

Dad was the supply sergeant for his battery. Think of the character Radar from the TV hit "Mash." He served in the U.S. Army from 10 Feb 1942 to 20 Oct 1945. In 1996 I took Dad & Mom to Wisconsin for a reunion with his Army buddies and sat in amazement as these men picked up conversations with each other as if it had been yesterday they last saw one another.

Here is Dad's statement:

Served in Battery 'B' 460th AAA/Automatic Weapons Battalion, European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army. Received Certificate of Merit in recognition of 'conspicuously meritorious and outstanding performance of military duty' -- citation -- Peter S. Peca, Colonel CAC 115th AAA Group Commanding Officer. Only Supply Sgt. of the original 460th AAA to last until war ended. Never assigned a Cpl. as a helper -- C.O. said I didn't need one -- assigned him to communications. Guess what! I helped lay wires while in war zones. Battles served in -- Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. Arrived in Czechoslovakia the day the War ended in Europe. Received EAME campaign medal with 5 Bronze Stars and a Good Conduct Medal.

Thank you for sharing & allowing me to partially hijack your topic in the comments. When I get long-winded in response to someone's blog, I think it might be time to start blogging for myself (never have at any site).

2230 days ago



DR1939

Just prior to departure my father was removed from the ship taking him to England. He was a cryptographer and an instructor had just died in an auto accident. My dad replaced him and spent all of the war in the States. His unit was at Normandy and many were killed. He asked my mother not to bury him in the Veteran's cemetery in Houston because he always felt he didn't take the risks that the men who served in Africa, Europe and the Pacific did and that he did not deserve the honors.

2230 days ago



PHEBESS

Wow, quite a trip for you, and interwoven with your dad's photos from way back then - just amazing!

Thank you for sharing with us!

(I bet you treasure that camera, too.)

2230 days ago



GINIEMIE

Thanks for sharing. Wow, four sons serving on war fronts at one time-what a trial for your Grandmother. And it's wonderful that they all made it back. I remember other blogs about your dad, I wished daddy and mom would have tracked their beginnings better and daddy's tour in Belgium and Germany.

In 1954, my mom took me and four siblings on the Queen Elisabeth from NY to Le Havre, then we took a train to Liege, Belgium where we stayed with my grandparents for several months. I really don't remember much except that we were sick on the ship-my brother's got chicken pox and mom was sea sick. I remember my grandma riding a train with us from Cleveland to New York, but not who met us at Le Havre. I remember my dad meeting us in New York when we got home, because I was hysterical. In the six months we were gone he had gotten new glasses and I didn't recognize him. There are gaps in my memories of that trip-but I did become bi-lingual.

Sorry you are triggering memories my dear friend.



2230 days ago



MDTWEETY

How amazing and special that you have his diary. What a treasure! Glad you were able to visit a place with so much meaning and history.

Looks like you are on your own "Amazing Race." :)

2230 days ago



MISCHAKEO

Thanks for sharing both your dad's pictures and yours as well. How exciting to go to the actual historical sites. That is a worthwhile tribute to all of the men who served.

THANK YOU!

2230 days ago





WILSONWR

What a great experience to explore some of the areas your dad was at during WWII. He took some great pictures too - what a way to pass on your memories of that time.
2230 days ago



SPINNINGJW

Somewhere in the "things" I "saved" from my parents house was a scrapbook that my Grandfather made from his SeaBee days in WWII.
2230 days ago



DOVESEYES

Thankyou for sharing all these photos and your Dad's memories, they are very powerful.

Lest we Forget.
2230 days ago



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