

Mort Block

Mort Block's Story

DOB 04/30/25

My story begins at age 18 upon graduation of high school in June of 1943. With my closest buddy we enlisted in the Navy. We were sent to Newport R.I. for boot training. After completion, Sal was assigned to Pharmacists Mate school in the South and I was to remain in Newport for further training at Signalman's school, for a total of 20 weeks. After successfully finishing this course I was sent to the Amphibious Base at Little Creek VA (Norfolk, VA). I made SM/3C at this location. After training at Virginia, I was sent to Lido Beach, Long Island, NY for assignment. In the new year, 1944, I had orders to report to a troop transport for overseas duty. Arrived in England in early January and immediately was sent to a large US Naval base in Roseneath, Scotland, near Glasgow. The British Isles were invaded by thousands upon thousands of US Air Force, Army, and Naval military waiting for the ultimate invasion of France. I must admit at 18 years of age and all the attention given to US troops by the many pretty girls, this sailor was having the time of his life. I was able to spend a short time with my brother who was at an Army base. After four months of Navy fitness and readiness for what was yet to come, I was sent to a Naval Base along the English Channel, a small resort village called Salcombe. In April 1944 I am about to celebrate my 19th birthday. This location had countless amphibious landing craft scattered in its many tributaries preparing for the invasion of Normandy. I was given sea duty aboard the Gun Fire Support Craft LCG-(L)6. This Amphibious ship, built by the British on loan to the US Navy, was armed with two five inch guns plus several 40mm anti-aircraft. This ship was able to stay close to the beach.



We spent April and May training at Slapton Sands beaches which was to resemble Utah beaches at Normandy. At Slapton Sands an unrevealed episode was to be uncovered ten years later. After practicing all day, on April 27th just after midnight five LST's sailing from Plymouth were to join our exercises. Nine German torpedo boats attacked and sank two LST's and badly damaged the three remaining, killing four times as many men as were lost at Utah Beach, Normandy. Army and Navy men lost their lives that night, approximately 949 was the count. If you want to learn more about this tragedy read Ken Small's book "The Forgotten Dead" or "The Invasion Before Normandy, The Secret Battle" by Edward P. Hoyt.

On the night of the 5th of June we crossed the English Channel in extremely bad weather in preparation for "D-Day", the 6th of June. We were part of a division transporting the 4th infantry to the beaches at Utah. On arrival, at about 6 am, we waited for a rendezvous to hit the beaches. As we were able to stay close to the beach we were to take out pillboxes and artillery that we could discover. It was not planned but we found ourselves rescuing the injured and dead. We took some friendly fire and shrapnel and of course there were some casualties. Four days later we transported men to hospitals in Plymouth, England.

At this time, I was transferred off the LCG6 and spent time at several Naval bases in the South of England.

In October 1944, the good news came that I was being sent back to the states. I made the journey on the Queen Mary (troop ship) and given a 30 day leave.

My future wife, Harriet, had just entered the US Nurse Cadet Corps to be trained as a R.N. under auspices of the government. Upon graduation she would have been commissioned as an officer but fortunately the war ended before her graduation. She went on to practice as an R.N.

After my leave, my family and Harriet, sent me off on a cross country trip, from Grand Central Train Terminal N.Y. to Camp Elliot San Diego. About a month later I was on my way to Pearl Harbor with orders to report to Division 48, Commodore Andrews staff, aboard the Flagship USS Talladega where I was part of staff but not

ship's crew. I boarded the Talladega just before Christmas of 1944 and spent 1945 in the Pacific. Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the landing of the first troops in Japan followed. I made SM/2C aboard the Talladega.

I won't go into detail about that year because Jerry Seymour and Bill Beidler have previously done so in their bios. When I look back at all I witnessed in both theaters of war, I feel extremely lucky to have survived without injuries. I will celebrate my 85th birthday this year and Harriet and I will be married 63 years.

I want to end here by saying how much I look forward to our yearly reunions and how much respect I have for all of you guys. I love all of you and can't wait to see you in Tucson in November. Mort