

## War Era Story Project 2012

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This is one of many stories to come from veterans since Pearl Harbor. Any time you pick up a magazine, you'll see a story of some veteran's war memory. Some are happy and some are sad. I went into the service in January 1943 and took basic training at Camp Rucker Alabama. I became a member of 736 Tank Battalion, Special. In July, we moved to Fort Knox, Kentucky. My company moved to an area called STG, which meant Special Training Group of buildings. It was a fenced and patrolled area about 30 miles from Fort Knox. We couldn't get passes during this training and we swore an oath to keep secret the training and the special tank we were training on. It was an older M3 we called a "General Grant." It had a special turret built on top that housed a carbon arc, 13 million candle power light. It was capable of lighting an area up to a thousand feet ahead. In September, our battalion moved to the Arizona Desert, where we trained until February. We then moved to the east coast to board the Queen Elizabeth. In early April, we arrived at Glasgow, Scotland, then by train traveled to Wales. Our training at this time was still secret and we could train only in day time.

In late July we moved to the English coast and boarded an LST (Landing Ship Tank). We crossed the channel at night and landed at Utah Beach. We made camp at a place we called "the orchard." While we were there, one of my buddies and I decided to paint something on our tank. Since I had been in music most of my life, my buddy painted a music staff complete with treble clef and notes and a dancing girl he copied from a picture of Rita Hayworth. The words "Jumpin' Jive" were painted at the top. The tank had a name! Soon after, around Thanksgiving, in keeping with Army "custom," the whole secret project was scrapped. I was on detail to take our tanks to Cherbourg.

When we returned to the orchard after Thanksgiving, we moved to Belgium, where shortly afterward, part of our battalion was sent to the front lines. My company was sent to the Muse River (still in Belgium) for special training. We were introduced to the Sherman tank designed to float. A Sherman tank weighs about 33 tons. The floating device, very simply described, was steel tubes attached to the sides of the tank and covered with canvas. Two propellers at the rear drove the tank through the water.

When we were driven close to the Rhine River we knew what our mission was. That evening when we were to cross, we saw a number of semi trucks pulling flat beds loaded with boats waiting to haul infantry across the Rhine. As we watched the parade, we heard tanks coming along the same route. The first tank was one of the ones we turned in at Cherbourg. The second was a big surprise. It was Jumpin' Jive. I was so glad to see it, I could have kissed it, but it was going too fast. What they were doing there, we will never know.

At midnight that night we crossed the Rhine and supported the infantry.

End of story