

# 333rd Harbor Craft Company, TC

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The U.S. Army's Transportation Corps (TC) was established 31 July 1942 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The TC is considered to be the Army's combat support branch, and is responsible for the movement of material and personnel by truck, rail, air, and sea.

The history of the responsibilities of the TC dates as far back as the Revolutionary War, when General George Washington appointed the first "Wagon Master", who can be considered the first Transportation Manager. The War of 1812 further demonstrated the need for a coherent policy on military transportation, and the Quartermaster General's office was created in 1818. Subsequently, the building of the Great Military Railroad in 1836 linked the borders of the American west with the east coast. The use of railroads as a chief strategy came into its own during the Civil War. During the Spanish-American War, railroads and shipping worked together to transport troops and supplies to the battlefields. A need for a separate TC was established in WW I, but it was deactivated following that conflict.

Following the 1942 reactivation of the TC, one of the divisions of the TC during WW II was on the water. The largest amphibious training base was Camp Gordon Johnston, located in northern Florida on the Gulf Coast. For four years, Camp Gordon Johnston trained hundreds of thousands of troops in amphibious operations. Camp Gordon Johnston trained both Army and Navy Personnel in all facets of the operation of amphibious warfare, including DUKWs,

gunnery ranges, assault courses, Special Engineer Brigades, Higgins boats, LCMs, LCPs, and LSTs.

On 20 Dec 1943, the 333rd Harbor Craft Company was activated at Camp Gordon Johnston and commanded by the unit's only commander for the duration of the war, Captain Charles G. McKee. The cadre was provided by the 4th Engineer Special Brigade. The TO consisted of 19 officers and 203 EM. Somewhere along the line the name "McKee's Raiders" stuck, and the company was known to its members and to history by that name.

As with the other HC companies, the men of the 333rd learned to operate tugs and cranes, tow boats, J-boats used for piquette duty, lighters, barges, scows and tank barges. The HC companies basically operated boats within harbors. The harbors themselves were operated by US Army personnel doing port operations. In less than five months the 333rd HC Co was on its way to the ETO, and participated in the transportation of supplies for the Army Ground Forces in England prior to D-Day and subsequently in France. The first stop in France was at the Utah Beachhead, followed by Cherbourg, St. Brige, Morlaix, Le Havre and Petit Couronne (on the Seine near Rouen).

One of the responsibilities of the 333rd was the operation of a 30-ton floating crane. The 90 feet high crane, powered by twin 225HP diesel engines, was used in salvaging operations. These operations included salvage of sunken ships in harbors, removal of broken mooring cables, stripping of

guns, and unloading heavy cargo.

While in the ETO, the company was assigned to the 5th and 13th Major Ports and COM-Z. The 333rd received campaign credit for Northern France.

## The Insignia

An album containing the entire documented career of Capt. McKee appeared recently in the shop of a well-known and respected militaria dealer. Everything was taped down, but it was complete. Capt McKee remained in the service, retiring as Chief of Engineers in the early 1970s at Ft. MacArthur, CA.

The very first page had the multi-piece leather patch on it, and a wealth of photos. The patch and some of the photos are presented here for the first time.



Locally-authorized SSI of 333rd Harbor Craft Co. (TC).



McKee's "fleet" in Petit Couronne 1945



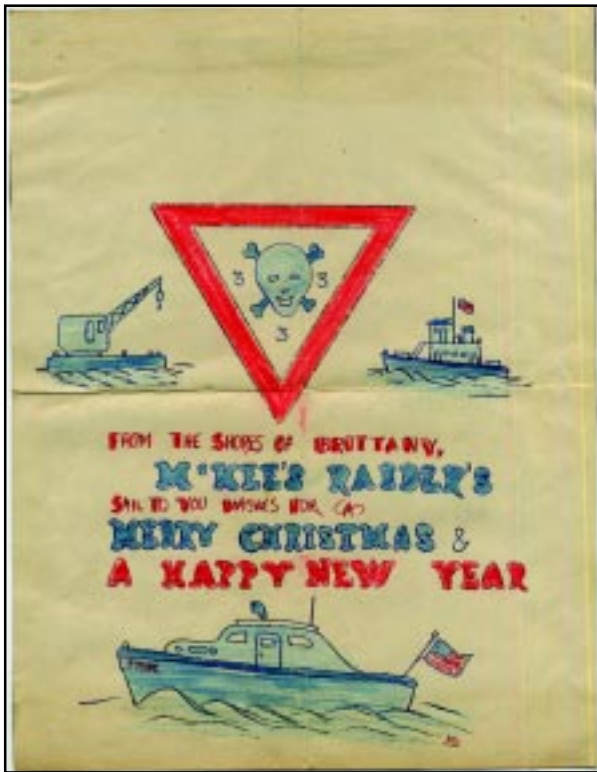
**Capt. Charles G. McKee, CO of 333rd HC Co; note his US Navy rank insigne**



**Capt. McKee and his unit-marked jeep**



**Company baseball team, possibly 1945**



Unknown year Christmas card



333rd tugboat Edward J.Rocanti in Le Havre 1945



New Warrant Officers; note sign



Fully embroidered variation of the 333rd HC Co SSI. This is on the right sleeve of an Ike, with an Army Amph Cmd SSI on the left. There is also an ETO ribbon w/ three battle stars. (Bill Keller collection)

*Author's note: There was one photo of a GI wearing the 333rd SSI, but it was not a portrait photo and if you didn't know what you were looking at, you wouldn't know it was a 333rd SSI.*