

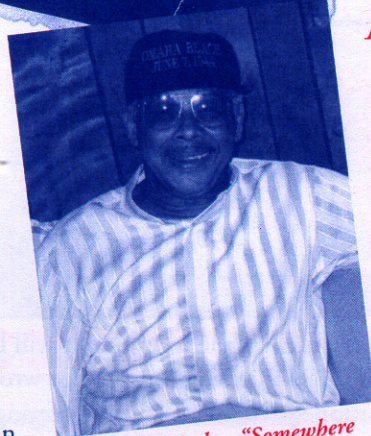
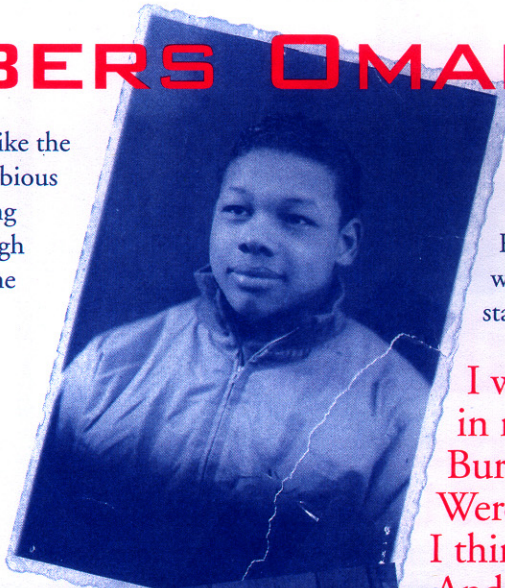
EDWARD FARLEY

REMEMBERS OMAHA BEACH

Staff Sergeant Edward B. Farley, like the rest of the soldiers in the 463rd Amphibious Truck Company, spent D-Day bobbing around in the English Channel. Though the company wanted to get on with the business of resupplying the troops on Omaha Beach before nightfall, the progress of the battle kept the 463rd at sea until the next morning. Finally, in the early hours of D+1, SSG Farley and his men mounted their DUKWs and headed to shore with their two-and-a-half-ton payloads. On land a DUKW (appropriately pronounced "duck") can travel at fifty-five miles an hour; in the water, it does less than six knots.

Traveling fully loaded at that speed, many of the DUKWs, carried by the current, came ashore east of their objectives. Looking for troops in the 116th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in the vicinity of St. Laurent-sur-Mer, SSG Farley eventually beached his DUKW on Easy Red instead of Dog Red. Realizing he was a mile away from his intended landing site and in an area occupied by the 16th RCT, he turned to his right and began making his way through the enemy fire and around the casualties as rapidly as he could. "So many in the water," he remembers, "so many on the sand moaning, falling, creeping. Suffering and confusion...everywhere."

His trek toward Dog Red had hardly begun when a captain stopped SSG Farley and directed him to dig in where he was and remain in place there until duly relieved. By the next day, however, the 463rd Amphibious Truck Company had reassembled near St. Laurent-sur-Mer and was up and running full tilt as part of the Provisional Engineer Special Brigade Group. As the battle moved inland, the pace of the logistical support effort increased, though not without risks. "We were exceptionally well trained, exceptionally committed to the people we



Top: SSG Farley, "Somewhere in France," 1944. Below: Edward Farley in his home at Petersburg, Virginia, 2001.

supported and, of course, to each other," he said. "Every man did his job, without hesitation, without complaint." Two of Edward Farley's men lost their lives when their vehicles were swamped. He memorializes them in two stanzas of one of his poems, "The War":

*I will always remember two men
in my platoon.
Burrell Parnell and Grady Hughes
Were their names.
I think about them often,
And often I am not the same.*

*They died for a noble cause
And for the freedom to always be.
Yet they could not go home
And, in certain places,
Buy a cup of tea.*

One of a relative handful of "colored soldiers" to participate in the early hours of Operation Overlord, Edward Farley looks back at his experiences then with undisguised pride. But today, like many of his contemporaries, this retired school teacher has become increasingly introspective about his wartime years and perhaps a little apprehensive about the future. "Veterans of World War II die/ At a thousand a day," he writes:

*We are old men now,
Who sometimes think of the past.
We still wonder sincerely
How long peace will last.*