



JUNE 2023

Stratford Veterans Museum



VETERAN OF THE MONTH



JOHN OLHA



D-DAY RECOLLECTION

by John Olha, Seaman 1st Class

John Olha was born March 24, 1925 in Bridgeport, CT. World War II had begun by the time John graduated from Bassick High School in Bridgeport.

During the war he served in the U.S. Coast Guard aboard the Assault Transport ship, the USS Samuel Chase, APA-26, and participated in the invasion of Omaha Beach, Normandy, France on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The crew took on the wounded and dead and prepared for the return voyage to Weymouth, England. After a few days they rejoined the invasion of southern France, transporting troops from Africa to Europe.

After completing their mission in Europe, the Chase went to the Pacific carrying troops to Okinawa, the Philippines, and other locations until the end of the war.

On September 8, 1945 the ship and her crew entered Tokyo Bay with Task Force 33 participating in the initial landing and occupation of Japan. This placed John at two historic moments during World War II.

After the war John furthered his education, earning degrees from the University of Connecticut, Bridgeport University and Fairfield University. He began his career in education as a teacher at Stratford High School, eventually becoming an Assistant Principal and then Principal. He also served as Assistant Superintendent in Bridgeport, and retired as Superintendent of Schools in Stratford, CT.

After the war the crew members of the Chase held annual reunions in different parts of the country. John was Treasurer of the USS Samuel Chase Association for several years and arranged many of those reunions.

John Olha passed away in Venice, Fl. At the age of 89.