

US ARMY "ST" TUGBOAT LOSSES IN WW2, ST's SENT TO THE PACIFIC AND A WAR'S END INVENTORY, & WW2 ST's AT D-DAY NORMANDY

Dan Friend Nov 3, 2013 DATPG

ST Losses in WW2

Some confusion and conflicts exist between six main sources of **US Army Small Tug WW2 loss** information. The sources are Tim Colton's *shipbuildinghistory.com*, David Grover's book *US Army Ships and Watercraft of World War II*, the website *Thamestugs.UK* which has details on the Normandy ST's, the book "*Ordeal of Convoy NY 119*" by Charles Dana Gibson, the WW2 ship losses mentioned in the US Merchant Marine website *USMM.org*, and Piet van Damme's details from his *tugslit* website.

A TOTAL OF ONLY 20 ST tugs were lost in WW2 according to David Grover in this list from his book on page 97. The other details listed are from all known sources. IN ALL RED: verified WW2 loss

ST

ST 35 Colton: unknown loss date in WW2 Van Damme, USMM: **foundered 9/9/1943**

ST 39 Colton: unknown loss date in WW2 Van Damme, USMM: **foundered 2/6/1944**

ST 40 unknown loss date in WW2 Grover, Colton **DeLand built tug** Van Damme: the same info; no USMM info

ST 75 lost in 1945 under German gunfire Colton Van Damme: the same info **CORRECTION:** John Fairbarn, son of 1st mate Charles Fairbarn who survived this sinking, tells me the event happened on July 18, 1944.

ST 120 NO INFO AT ALL, NOT EVEN BUILDER? Grover shows as "cancelled"; not listed in Colton; no other info? Listed in error

ST 163 **Edward Schenk**, purchased, built 1916, 43 footer, unknown loss date; Grover only

ST 165 unknown loss date in WW2 Colton Van Damme, USMM: **foundered 8/27/1943**

ST 239 **Edith Foss**, purchased, built in 1901, 117 footer, unknown loss date- Grover only

ST 338 **SOLD TO FINLAND 1946...not sunk in WW2** Colton Van Damme: not lost in WW2 -error

ST 344 hit mine and exploded in Cherbourg Harbor in July 1944 Thamestugs **DeLand built tug**

ST 371-LISTED AS AN LT in Colton **and** Grover? sold off in 1946 Colton Not listed in Van Damme -error

ST 395 **Maurine**, purchased, built in 1929, 63 footer, unknown loss date Grover USMM says **foundered 4 02 43** on the West Coast.

ST 511 **foundered 10 18 1944** Convoy 119 & Colton Van Damme: **INCORRECTLY** states sunk by torpedo, USMM date of loss 10 18 44

ST 672 **foundered 9 15 44** Colton & Van Damme **DeLand built tug**

ST 674 Sold in 1946 Not sunk in WW2 Colton **DeLand built tug** Van Damme: not sunk in WW2-error

ST 675 **foundered** in 9 23 1944 N Atlantic Colton & Van Damme **DeLand built tug**

ST 719 **foundered 9 26 44**, Convoy NY 119 N Atlantic * 719 and 720 shown in Tim Colton's list as **torpedoed** but they certainly foundered: Convoy NY 119 & Van Damme

ST 720 **foundered 10 18 44**, Convoy NY 119

ST 721 sold off after the war..not sunk in WW2 Colton Van Damme: not sunk in WW2-error

ST 731 (Sold off in 1946, ...not sunk in WW2?- Colton) - !! Grover said it sank in WW2; Van Damme, USMM says it **foundered** 10 19 1944! Counted as sunk in WW2.

Of the 20 boats listed in Grover, ST 120 has no info at all including builder and 371 was an LT, not an ST, but also was not sunk...3 are Army purchased existing older boats.

1. Ten of the 15 tugs foundered.
2. 3 of the boats listed (in green) were not lost in WW2 at all according to other detailed records.
3. Only four boats sank prior to June of 1944. Three others were lost with no date given, but three of the four were much older tugs; not the all-steel ST. The fourth was DeLand's steel ST 40.

In summary: removing the 3 that apparently survived the war, and ST 120 which was cancelled and listed in error and LT 371, leaves only 15 ST's sunk in WW2 on the Grover list....not 20. By comparison, Gerald Reminick says that 17 ST's were lost in his book "Little Ships: Tugboats at D-Day, Normandy"

THREE OTHER ST WW2 LOSSES RECORDED in 1944-45 BUT NOT ON THE GROVER LIST:

ST-253 - Thamestugs.uk

Built 1943 by Levingston Shipbuilding Corp, Orange, Tx. YN 294. 155 GRT. 86.5'x23'x8.6'. 650bhp 8cyl Superior National Supply type L08 diesel engine.

11-1943 Launched. 12-1943 Delivered to US Army. **21-7-1944** Sank after striking mine in Cherbourg harbour.

Tim Colton's Chart and Records:

ST	794	Bushey & Sons, Ira S.	Brooklyn NY		S	86	1944	Ex-DPC 60, sunk in Le Havre 1944
								Van damme says not sunk in WW2 &. USMM does not mention. But this tug was seen sunk at Le Havre by the crew of ST 488 and so recorded in their ship's log.
ST	10	Equitable Equipment	New Orleans LA	255	S	82	4/43- 5/43	Foundered 1/16/45 killing 5 crew. USMM Van Damme also says lost 1945 (the number ST 10 was re-used in 1948!)

Grover says ST 10 was LT 10 on page 97...but shows it as an ST in his chart as well.

My best guess based on a review and comparison of available records is that the corrected total number of recorded ARMY ST's lost in WW2 is **18 tugboats: 10, 35, 39, 40, 75, 163, 165, 239, 253, 344, 395, 511, 672, 675, 719, 720, 731, and 794**

"We lost so many....."

Joe Richards' harrowing voyage with ST 250 which forms the main story in the book *Tug of War* ends with an interview with a top officer (who is never named) that supports Richards' strong

view the tugs were extremely top heavy and unstable...and perhaps the theory that many all-steel ST's capsized early in the war and may not have been recorded to maintain morale. The overall lack of records aids in this thought as well; and certainly the Army didn't help by destroying the small ship logs after the war. Was this an attempt to cover up undisclosed losses or just Army thoughtlessness? Perhaps 70% of all US Army ST's have no records at all after delivery to the US Army.

Dates are scarce in Richards' book, but I can work out that he was back in the USA in late May 1944. At that point, upon his stateside return, the officer in charge of the Pacific ST tugboat trips asked him how he had made the trip to Hawaii safely. After Richards replied, the officer then said **"We lost so many..."**

So how many ST tugboats were lost prior to June of 1944? What was this officer speaking about? It would appear that at the MOST, 7 of the current adjusted list of 18 possibly were lost prior to June of 1944...would that officer have said to Joe Richards "We lost so many..." based on a maximum possible recorded loss of only 7 boats...and it might be even less of some of the four ships with unknown loss dates were lost later in 1944-1945? Of the seven, three were much older tugs purchased instead of being built. Even if this Army officer knew of all ST losses in all theaters, and all of the seven happened prior to early June of 1944, this appears to be a very small number actually recorded as lost and a very strange statement to make. It is also a bit unusual that no ST losses are recorded on the French coast or the Normandy area until ST 344 (a DeLand boat) is lost by a mine in mid-July 1944 at Cherbourg. Nor are any ST losses recorded in the Pacific, which is where they were experimenting with impossible ST trips to Hawaii.....remember this was all prior to Convoys NY 118 & 119. It certainly is possible that many of these losses happened in the Pacific recently under his watch giving the officer a short-term perspective....perhaps further research may provide a better answer.

This WW2 ST loss revision makes the DeLand ST WW2 recorded tug losses 4 out of 18: still a huge loss percentage versus the other boat builders. Only 22 ST's built in DeLand probably were made in time to be in harm's way. Two at least of the four foundered. Nothing whatsoever is known about 4 other DeLand Warboats at this time.....if it turns out some of them were lost in WW2 the overall loss percentage of our American Machinery Corp tugs becomes even more unbelievable. And if they "foundered".....

* * * * *

U. S. ARMY TRANSPORTATION In the SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA 1941-1947

Appendix 35 – Number of Harbor Boats from the United States in the U.S. Army Service in the Southwest Pacific Area on the first day of each month January –August 1945

Number of ST's in the PACIFIC THEATER as of August 1945:

Tugs, medium, **72' to 99'**, (all types: wood and steel)

August 1, 1945: **52 72'-99' tugs left at war's end**

Appendix 38 – Harbor Craft constructed by the Transportation Corps in the United States and Delivered to the Southwest Pacific Area 1943-1945:

Harbor tugs, diesel, steel, **85'**, Design 327-DS, E, F:

ST 839 (DeLand boat), 507, 733, 694 **4 ST tugs**

Harbor tugs, diesel, wood, **72'**, *Design 332*: **ST 381, 383-386,**
403-409, 457-460, 468-472 **21 ST tugs**

Harbor tugs, diesel, wood, **96'**, *Design 333*: **TP 97, 101-106,**
108-110, 112-121, 124, 125, 128-131 **26 TP tugs**

Constructed tugs: 51 tugs 72'–99'

Other Smaller ST tugs in the PACIFIC:

Harbor tugs, **45'**, diesel, steel, *Design 320*:
ST 557-559, 561-566, 568-571, 574-576, 588, 590, 591, 593-600, 607-615, 618-629, 632

49 ST tugs

Total ST's of all sizes sent to the pacific: 100 boats
(No Design 257 74" steel ST tugs were sent there?)

* * * * *

Corrected List of ST's At Normandy

"The construction of harbors was a massive undertaking and required the use of 158 tugboats. The Army Transportation Service (ATS) supplied 74 ST small tugs and 6 LT large tugs.

Army Transportation Museum Website.....

Where is the list of these 74 tugs?????

Thamestugs.uk & Piet van Damme's tugslit **US ARMY ST'S ACTIVE AT NORMANDY BEACHES D-DAY**

(30 ST tugs) *thamestug.uk* list: 16, 247, 248, 253, 335, 338, 344, 698, 705, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 778, 780, 781, 794, 795

**(3) Additional ST tugs from the Piet Van Damme database:
ST 86, 479, 732 = a total of 33 NORMANDY ST tugboats.
(PLUS: two more tugs had one man killed each at Normandy
according to USMM.org: ST 539 on 9/19/44; and ST 725 on 10/20/44.**

These dates are a bit too late for Mulberry work; but they MIGHT have been there. Not added yet.)

This total of 33 ST tugs known to be at Normandy leaves 41 as yet unidentified tugs assuming the number of 74 sent to Normandy, according to the US Army Transportation Museum, is correct. The 41 would come from the well over 100 ST tugs that *could* have been there; as they were sent to a depot at war's end at Antwerp or Rotterdam, so they made the trip over to Europe....but only further details will add to the list. [Normandy Warboats 344](#) and [479](#) were made in DeLand...and [ST 479](#) lives on today in Stockholm, Sweden.

A full cross-comparison of all known “Normandy ST’s” sources is in progress.....

Dan Friend November 2013