

LCI 440 - The Story of Domick C. Maurone



Dominick C. Maurone
US Navy 1943-1946

LCI 440

ELECTRICIAN MATE 3RD CLASS

USS LCI (G)440

(Dominick C Maurone)

Dominick C Maurone was born in Philadelphia Pa, on November 11th 1924, he graduated from high school In June 1942. He was drafted and volunteered in the Navy Reserves in September, 1943. He did his boot camp training at Great Lakes Illinois. He spent three years in the Navy during the second world war. He was discharged in June of 1946. Post navy he worked 40 years for Honeywell Inc. Retiring in 1986. And now lives in Englewood Florida.

After boot camp training I Boarded a troop ship as a passenger at Norfolk Virginia we went trough the Panama Canal on our way to Pearl Harbor. One of my first non combat experience was the troop ship breaking down somewhere in the Pacific ocean and watching a huge sand shark swimming along side the ship. It was somewhat scary, the breakdown only lasted for about 5 hours and we were again on our way to Pearl Harbor. We arrived at pearl Harbor in late December 1943 It was a beautiful sight nulling into the harbor the water was blueish green and very still.

and very still.

I was in the receiving barracks for 2 weeks before I was assigned to the LCI(G)

440. During those two weeks I was assigned to a work force on a daily basis.

It was the early part of Jan. 1944 when I boarded the ship as a seaman second class.

The ship was originally built as a Landing craft for landing infantry on the beaches.

It was converted to a gunboat for close range support for our troops during an

invasion. It was part of the Amphibious naval force. The ship was 157' long and 24'

in the beam. It was manned by 57 crewman and 4 officers. The armament consisted

of 3, 40 mm aircraft guns, 2, 20 mm cannons and 8, 50 caliber machine guns, and

42, 4.5" rocket launchers each holding 12, 4.5" rockets. There were an additional

5 single rocket launchers that were mounted to hinge over the side outside the four

rows along side the ramp decks. Their were a total of 504 highly explosive rockets

that could be launch at the beach in a matter of seconds, but they were never

launched all at once, but in banks. These 4.5" rockets had more destructive power

than any navy 5" projectile. It was said that we had the firing power of the class 2200

Destroyer.

Most of the crew were fairly new with a few experience sailors. All the officers were

the 90 day wonder type The highest rank was our Commander who was a Lt jg.

His name was C. J. Keyes and we use to refer to him as 88 keyes. He was a gentle

person

with a nice personality He very seldom spoke individually to the crew. He would talk to the whole crew in the mess hall when there was some news that we had to know about. Normally the officers very seldom mingled with the crew. Our Gunnery and executive officer was Vyron Grace Lt. J.G. Engineering officer was J. Simon Ens., and the commissary officer was also a ensign.

Our ship and other LCI's went out on maneuvers practicing our firing power on the island of Maui (Long before it became a tourist resort) Most of us were inexperienced and have never been in combat before.

My battle station was a first loader on a 40 mm gun on the port side of the gun deck. That was my first encounter with this gun.

After a short acquaintance of practicing general Quarters, damage control , support for beach head landings, we were on our way to help win the war .Our destination ,the Marshall Islands. These Islands had been in Japanese control since 1917 and it would be the first time we would be moving in to Japanese territory. The Islands are actually atolls, a total of 30. The 2 main islands are Kwajalein atoll. and Eniwetok.

A day from the Marshall islands general quarters was sounded. Our first encounter in combat. A jap plane flew over the convoy , looked like a observation plane. The whole convoy open fired at the plane, it was high and flying at a slow speed, not one shell hit

that plane. General quarters was secured and all I could think about was that we must have spent a million dollars worth of ammo at that plane and no one hit it.

On D- Day January 31 1944. We led the first wave of marines into the Roi Namur islands firing our rockets at the island along with group 8 which consisted of 8 other LCI's. After the rockets were launched we turned broadside and continued firing at the beach beyond the marines. Once the beachhead was established we then retreated back .We appeared to be so close to the beach you could actually see the snipers in the trees. The afternoon run was made on Arno atoll, and Majura atoll. On February 1st we hit the main objective which was Kwajalein atoll which was the main Japanese Naval base in the Marshall islands. In total we were involved in 26 beachhead landings .Eniwetok the other large atoll took place on February 19th 1944. On the 22nd we made our last run which was also the last island to be taken in the campaign. This was one day that never left my mind. We were making our run and we had just finished firing our last salvo of rockets, we turned starboard facing Parry island. We had just begun to fire on the island when our 40mm gun jammed. I was the first loader on the gun. I had to go beneath the gun to get the shell out that jammed the gun. The gun crew consisted of 4 people, 2 who guided the direction and firing , and a first loader who would load the gun. (There was 4 shell to each clip), and a second loader who would remove the clips from the magazine and hand them to the first loader. While under the gun I

heard this large hissing sound, it sounded like rockets going off. I then noticed the second loader of our gun lying on the deck. When I looked at him he was bleeding and had a large gap in his back. I didn't hear anymore firing from our ship and we were under attack. We appeared to be drifting instead of moving slowly in one direction. We were out of action and we were told to take cover. To this day I don't know what made me go to the rear of the gun deck and slide down the ladder to the fantail while the rest of the crew on the front of the gun deck went down the ladder to the weld deck. We were hit with 5" shells. The first one hitting on the front starboard side of the gun deck. The second one hit the ladder going down to the weld deck. That day we were carrying some guest Officers who wanted to see what the action looked like up front. The first shell hit the starboard side destroying the 40 mm gun, damaging the conning tower, wounding some of the officers in the conning tower, putting the radio room and steering out of business. While we were drifting out of control we could hear the bullets hitting the winch which sat in the middle of the fantail. Up to that time I was too occupied to feel any fear. Sitting there and praying I was sure as hell scared. One of our crew was able to get down below the fantail and switch over to manual control which was a big steering wheel which you turned by hand, that later on in other campaigns became my post during general quarters. The marines had secured the beachhead and we were able to restart our engines and pull away from the

gun and mortar fire from Engobi Island, Eniwetok Atoll on Feb. 8 1944. Also on the 22 of Feb. 1944 the 440 had two direct 5 inch shell hits off of Perry Island in which 8 men were killed and 35 men were injured. Some of the less serious injured members of the crew with complete disregard for their own safety assisted in extinguishing fires, restoring communications and administering first aid to the seriously wounded.]

C.J. Keyes Lt. USNR

The LCI(G) 440 went through three more campaigns, Marianna's Philippines, and Okinawa, without any further damage or injuries. In total we made twenty nine assaults leading either the Marines or Soldiers in establishing a beachhead on all these landings.

There were hundreds of LCI's that were used for supplying gun power for our Marines and Soldiers.

There were LCI's damaged and sunk by enemy fire, but there were also a few of us that were damaged and had casualties by friendly fire.

I am proud to have been a sailor stationed on the 440

Dominick D'Amico
EM 3/c LCI(G) 440

