

LCI(L)-96 - By Richard "Dick" Kliemt

My name is Richard ("Dick") Kliemt. I was a Lieutenant in the US Coast Guard and the Engineering Officer aboard the USS LCI 96 during World War 2.

The LCI 96 was active in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of operation during World War 2. She made landings in Sicily, Italy and on the beaches at Normandy.

The Flotilla was #103 and #19 and was the only LCI group that was manned by the US Coast Guard.

After her duty in Europe , the "96" retraced her steps back to Norfolk, Virginia where she was re-outfitted for further duty in the Pacific I boarded her there as Lieutenant in charge of Engineering, maintaining the Grey Marine "Quads" that General Motors produced solely for the LCI.

In 1944 we took her through the Panama Canal up to San Diego. Here we were re-camouflaged and outfitted with smoke machines and new weapons We practiced making "landings" around San Clemente. We lost a few shipmates during those practice runs when a heavy surf washed a few men overboard despite some major effort to rescue them.

The "96" went across the Pacific where we transported troops and Naval personnel around the island of Ulithi and then over to Kerrama Rhetta and Okinawa where we fought off Kamikazes and "made smoke" covering the bigger ships of the fleet (including the "IOWA") and performed duty on the "picket line" which protected the fleet in Buckner Bay.

We encountered two typhoons during that tour of duty. After the "bomb" was dropped, the " 96 " was reassigned to the Navy Task Force in charge of clearing the mines in Japanese waters to allow the Occupation Troops and Ships to enter those waters.

As a "destruction" vessel the "96" detonated approximately 250 mines which were swept up by the Navy minesweepers we were assigned to. This was accomplished in the waters of the East China Sea, around Nagoya, Sasebo, Osaka and Wakayama.

In early 1946 we sailed the "96" back to the states and decommissioned her at San Pedro, California. Lieut., George Herrick (now deceased) and I were the only remaining personnel on board at that time.

The "96" was awarded a Commendation from the Commander of COMINPAC upon the completion of that assignment in which was stated that the" LCI proved that it could do most anything including what it was originally designed for."

The last we saw of her was when she was being towed out into San Pedro Bay with two other LCIs and put into the mothball fleet. That was in April or May of 1946. I was discharged the following day and returned back to New York. I am interested in trying to locate some of my shipmates...specifically Lieut. Sam Underwood of Maryland and Lieut. Owen B. Smith of Okeechobee Florida, and anyone else for that matter that can recall those hectic days we spent under "condition red" and those days after of the typhoon when we found ourselves washed ashore in Osaka.

Richard (Dick) Kliemt