



# Elsie Item

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
USS LANDING CRAFT, INFANTRY, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

• *Established May 14–18, 1991, Norfolk, VA* •

**ISSUE 75**

**MAY 2011**



## "UNDERWAY FOR D-DAY"

LCIs in column head for the beaches.  
A painting by combat artist **Dwight Shepler**  
(See more of his paintings, Pages 4 and 25)

Official publication of the USS LCI National Association, a non-profit veteran's organization. Membership in the USS LCI National Association is open to any U. S. Navy or U.S. Coast Guard veteran who served aboard a Landing Craft Infantry, to anyone related to an LCI veteran, or to anyone just interested in the history of LCIs. Published quarterly by the USS LCI National Association. John P. Cummer, Editor. Any material for possible publication should be sent to the Editor, preferably by email (cummerj@bellsouth.net) or by regular mail to 302 Pinewood Cottage Lane, Blythewood, SC, 29016.

## **In This Issue**

**Dwight Shepler**, whose paintings of LCIs are on our cover and pages 4 and 25, was an American naval officer and painter. In 1943 he went to England and took part in the 1944 Normandy invasion as an artist. With events captured clearly in his mind and on film, Shepler went home to Massachusetts to create more detailed paintings from his sketches and film footage. Over his entire career he observed the landings at Ormoc Bay and Lingayen Gulf and operations at Corregidor and Bataan. Again he took all the images back home to finalize the last of over 300 paintings in total. He retired from the service with the rank of commander and was awarded the Bronze Star. He died in 1944.

## **Your 2011 Dues are Due Now!**

Our thanks to all of you who responded to our recent mail-out by paying last year's dues. Now we need all of our shipmates to forward their dues for the current year.

Why now instead of at our annual reunion time?

Last year we moved our reunion from a spring date to the fall so that we could meet with the LSM/LSMR Association and thus have the numbers necessary to obtain hotel accommodations.

That means, however, that we have not had the usual influx of dues this spring and so we now face cash flow problems that mean we will have to cash in some of our Certificates of Deposit in order to meet expenses. We're reluctant to do that because it would mean loss of interest on those CDs.

So we need to ask you to pay your 2011 dues now. We will make those dues payment through the fall of 2012

Please make your payment of \$25.00 to:

**USS LCI National Association**  
C/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc.  
101 Rice Bent Way, #6  
Columbia, SC 29229

# A Word from the President/Editor



Remember this one?

“Shipmates, stand together!  
Don’t give up the ship!  
Fair or stormy weather,  
We won’t give up; we won’t give up the ship”

Last time I remember singing it with a bunch of sailors was while marching in boot camp. Our company won a “rooster” for singing it during a pass-in-review. We may have thought it a bit corny, but, remembering John Paul Jones, we hung on to the sentiment. We fought like hell to get our ships through tough times.

So why do I bring it up now? Because we need to hear from you to know that you’re not ready to give up on our “ship”—our LCI Association. With time taking its toll on us we need to ask for special effort from all of you.

Here’s the situation: A hard look at our finances makes it clear that we will have to have additional resources and make some cost-cutting changes in order to keep going. Because we get such positive response from the membership when we ask if we should keep going, we feel we should do all possible to do that. Your officers and board members, with the valuable counsel of Ken Breivik, CEO of Nehemiah Communications, have looked at several alternatives and now want to put them before you.

First, you should know that we rejected the options of raising our annual dues, or continuing to operate until our assets are exhausted, or dissolving the Association.

What we plan to is:

1. Clear up our membership list by sending an “Opt in” form to all you life members, telling you that you will need to respond if you wish to be continued. It is apparent that we are carrying many life members who are no longer with us because last year we experienced a 24% drop in regular members and only a 4% drop in life members. Reason would suggest that the rate should be about the same for both groups. Clearing up our mailing list will result in some savings in the cost of *Elsie Item*.
2. Reduce *Elsie Item* expenses by reducing the size from 32 pages to 24 pages and the print run from 1,650 to 1,500.
3. Take advantage of a generous offer from Nehemiah Communications to reduce their fee by \$100 per month.

And here is the one where we need you to help:

4. Conduct a fund-raising effort to raise at least \$7,000 for the next fiscal year

You’ll be hearing more about this fund-raising drive in the near future – special recognitions to show our gratitude for those shipmates who can help us stay afloat.

But you don’t need to wait for that! Send your donation now to:

USS LCI National Association  
C/O Nehemiah Communications, Inc.  
101 Rice Bent Way #6  
Columbia, SC 29229

“Don’t Give Up the Ship!”

*-John Cummer*

# The Combat Art of Dwight Shepler

As preparations were being made for D-Day, Combat Artist **Dwight Shepler** used LCIs in many of his paintings. The originals of these paintings are in the museum at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. **John Cummer** and **Tiny Clarkson** discovered these pictures when the LCI Association met for reunion there in 2003. *(Continued on page 29)*



"When is D-Day?" –  
Overlooking the  
entrance to  
Dartmouth Harbor.  
Note LCIs at anchor.

"Fowey,  
England" U.S.  
Sailors visit  
this small port  
in Cornwall.  
Note LCIs in  
the harbor.



# Last Call for Hotel Reservations!

## SHERATON MUSIC CITY HOTEL – NASHVILLE (615) 885-2200 or (888) 627-7060

(Please reference the USS LSM LSMR/LCI National Association Reunion to obtain the special reunion room rate)

The Sheraton Music City Hotel is located at 777 McGavock Pike, Nashville, TN 37214. Call the hotel for accurate driving directions. Situated on 23 lush acres, located within minutes of downtown Nashville, the Sheraton offers easy access to many of Nashville's attractions, such as The Grand Ole Opry and the Country Music Hall of Fame. All guest rooms feature an oversized room, a balcony or patio, The Sheraton Sweet Sleeper Bed, refrigerator, coffee maker, iron/ironing board, hairdryer, and a spacious bath. Handicapped rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservations. Recreational features include health club facilities, indoor/outdoor pools, and tennis courts. Sheraton Music City is a non-smoking hotel. The hotel provides complimentary parking for its guests. Check-in time is 3:00pm, check-out time is 12:00pm. Restaurants on site are the **Old Hickory Grill**, featuring southern cooking, and **The Veranda** lobby lounge. Room service is also available.

Complimentary airport shuttle service is provided by the hotel from the Nashville International Airport. The shuttle runs from 5:30am until 11:00pm. Proceed to the baggage claim area and once you have claimed your luggage, call the hotel from the courtesy phone in that area for pickup. You may want to consider other transportation services, as space is limited on courtesy services.

If you are driving an RV, call the Nashville KOA at (615) 889-0286 for information, directions and to make a reservation. They are located at 2626 Music Valley Drive, Nashville, TN, approximately 15 minutes from the hotel.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll free number at (888) 441-7575 for details. All prices quoted include delivery fees.

### Vendors, Schedules, and Prices are subject to change.

\*\*\*\*\*CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL\*\*\*\*\*  
USS LSM-LSMR ASSOCIATION & USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION REUNION - HOTEL RESERVATION FORM  
REUNION DATES: SEPTEMBER 7-11, 2011

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SHARING ROOM W/ \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TEL. NUMBER ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ STARWOOD PREFERRED GUEST # \_\_\_\_\_

ARRIVAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_ APPROX. TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DEP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ # OF ROOMS NEEDED \_\_\_\_\_ # OF PEOPLE IN ROOM \_\_\_\_\_ HANDICAP ACCESS

\_\_\_\_\_ KING BED \_\_\_\_\_ 2 DOUBLE BEDS

In the event room type requested is not available, nearest room type will be assigned.

**RATE:** \$109 + tax (currently 15.25% + \$2.50 per night city assessment) Rate will be honored three days before and after reunion, based on availability.

**CUT OFF DATE:** 08/5/11. Reservations received after this date will be processed based on space and rate availability basis.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled 24 hours prior to the day of arrival. Call 615-885-2200 should you need to cancel your room reservation. All reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit, enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ AMEX \_\_\_\_\_ DINERS \_\_\_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_\_\_ MASTER CARD \_\_\_\_\_ DISCOVER

CREDIT CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE (regardless of payment method) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: SHERATON MUSIC CITY HOTEL\* 777 McGAVOCK PIKE \* NASHVILLE, TN 37214\* ATTN: RESERVATIONS

**JOINT REUNION  
USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
&  
USS LSM LSMR ASSOCIATION  
SEPTEMBER 7 – 11, 2011  
SHERATON MUSIC CITY – NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**Wednesday, September 7**

2:00pm - 7:00pm **Reunion Registration open**  
1:00pm - Hospitality Room opens for the duration of the reunion.

**Thursday, September 8**

9:00am - 10:00am **Reunion Registration open**  
11:00am - 3:00pm GEN. JACKSON LUNCH CRUISE (description follows)  
3:00pm - 5:00pm **Reunion Registration open**  
4:00pm - 5:00pm LCI Affiliates Meeting

**Friday, September 9**

8:00am - 8:30am **Reunion Registration open**  
9:00am - 2:00pm CITY TOUR (description follows)  
3:00pm - 5:00pm **Reunion Registration open.** Additional hours will be posted at the reunion if necessary.  
5:45pm - 10:00pm GRAND OLE OPRY (description follows)

**Saturday, September 10**

7:00am - 8:30am Breakfast buffet  
9:00am - 11:00am Business Meeting for the USS LCI National Association  
9:00am - 11:00am Business Meeting for the USS LSM LSMR Association  
11:00am - 12:00pm USS LSM LSMR Association Memorial Service  
1:00pm - 2:00pm USS LCI National Association Memorial Service  
5:00pm - Cash Bar Reception  
6:30pm - Banquet and entertainment

**Sunday, September 11**

Farewells & Departures

**CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.**

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$7 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. **Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays.** Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

## **TOUR DESCRIPTIONS**

### **GENERAL JACKSON LUNCH CRUISE**

Thursday, September 8

The world's grandest showboat cruises the majestic Cumberland River to downtown Nashville, fourteen miles roundtrip. Enjoy a brand new show outfitted with extreme humor, amazing music, and the best food you'll taste this side of the South. Get ready for some true hand-clappin', toe-tappin' Nashville entertainment and hospitality.

**11:00am board bus, 3:00pm back at hotel**

**\$78/Person includes bus, escort, and lunch cruise.**

### **CITY TOUR**

Friday, September 9

Begin a tour of Nashville with trained professional guides who will entertain your group with interesting facts, colorful legends, and amusing anecdotes of Nashville and her people. Drive by the Governor's Mansion, as well as homes of several well-known personalities such as Tammy Wynette, Ronnie Milsap, and Minnie Pearl. Drive through Centennial Park and view the Parthenon, a full-scale replica of the original in Greece. Visit the Ryman Auditorium, where the Grand Ole Opry got its start. Originally a church, the Ryman is now home to numerous musical productions. Stop on 2nd Avenue for lunch on your own at one of several different restaurants. Consider Market Street Brewery, Big River Grille, Hard Rock Cafe, or the Wild Horse Saloon.

**9:00am board bus, 2:00pm back at hotel**

**\$46/Person includes bus, guide, and admission. Lunch on your own.**

### **GRAND OLE OPRY**

Friday, September 9

During any given Opry show, audiences can expect the best in country, bluegrass, comedy, gospel, and more by Country Music Hall of Famers, cast members who helped establish the Opry as the home of country music, revered superstars, and young artists just starting to make names for themselves. It is the longest-running live radio show in the world. Sit back and enjoy an American Institution at its entertaining best.

**5:45pm board bus, 10:00pm back at hotel**

**\$67/Person includes bus, escort, and show.**

*Driver and Guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices.*

*Please plan to be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.*

*All trips require a minimum of thirty people, unless otherwise stated.*

## USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at [www.afr-reg.com/lcilsn](http://www.afr-reg.com/lcilsn). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 5, 2011. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

**Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.**  
**322 Madison Mews**  
**Norfolk, VA 23510**  
**ATTN: USS LCI NATIONAL ASSN.**

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	Nametag Completed _____

<i><b>CUT-OFF DATE IS 8/5/11</b></i>	<b>Price Per</b>	<b># of People</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><u>TOURS</u></b>			
THURSDAY: LUNCH CRUISE	\$78		\$
FRIDAY: CITY TOUR	\$46		\$
FRIDAY: GRAND OLE OPRY	\$67		\$
<b><u>MEALS</u></b>			
SATURDAY: BREAKFAST BUFFET	\$15		\$
SATURDAY: BANQUET <i>(Please select your entrée)</i>			
ROAST STRIP SIRLOIN	\$40		\$
CHICKEN MARSALA	\$40		\$
SALMON	\$40		\$
<b><u>MANDATORY PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE</u></b>			
Includes Hospitality Room and administrative expenses.	\$20		\$
<b>Total Amount Payable to <u>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</u></b>			<b>\$</b>

PLEASE PRINT AS YOU WANT YOUR NAMETAG TO READ

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

LCI PREFIX (LCI, LCI(G), etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ LCI # \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST NAMES \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, ST, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PH. NUMBER (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU HAVE A SEATING PREFERENCE, **OTHER THAN W/ YOUR SHIP**, PLEASE SPECIFY \_\_\_\_\_

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

*(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly to hotel)*

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS?  YES  NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_ PH. NUMBER (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

ARRIVAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTURE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-5:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays)**. Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion.





# THEY GAVE THEIR ALL:

## The Loss of LCIs 232 and 219

By  
**John France,**

USS LCI Historian for the European Theater of Operations

### LCI 214

**Ted Ponseti**, a plank-owner on LCI 214, was born in New Orleans on December 12, 1924. At the time of his enlistment on January 1, 1942, he was working in a gambling house in his home town of New Orleans. Within two days of enlistment he was bound for Chicago on a train. He said that ate the best food in his life on that train.

He went to boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Station where he bunked in a new building. They had hammocks instead of beds and initially few people got any sleep. The boys were not accustomed to sleeping in hammocks and they kept falling out and onto the hard floor.

After "Boots," he went to Signalman School in Chicago and graduated in July, 1942. He then went to Little Creek, Virginia, for training. The base was still under construction and "all mud." He stayed on the troop transport *Leonard Wood* for about one month and spent liberty in Norfolk which he described in terms not suitable for tender ears! He recalls seeing a sign "No animals or sailors on grass!"

While there, he paid \$14.00 for a set of custom made blues, which were actually black instead of Navy Blue.

Having been promoted to Signalman 3rd Class Ponseti was aboard LCI 214 for her commissioning on October 31, 1942, and sailed with her on her shakedown cruise.

After this cruise, they sailed to Baltimore where they added a square "Conn." Under the command of **Lt. (jg) George J. Murray McGee, USNR**, the 214 joined Flotilla 2 the first week of January, 1943.

### LCI 219

LCI 219 was commissioned on November 20, 1942. Under the command of Lt (jg) Albert Joseph Corsi, USNR, they also joined LCI Flotilla 2 at Little Creek, Virginia, during the first week of January, 1943. Originally designated as Flotilla 1 on December 12, 1942, this Flotilla was re-designated as Flotilla 2 on January 1, 1943.

### LCI 232

LCI 232 was commissioned on January 15, 1943. It did not sail with Flotilla 2 to Africa but sailed later with Flotilla 1 along with LCIs 32, 33, 35 229 and 231. These LCIs were transferred to Flotilla 2 in Tunisia on April 15, 1943.

### Flotilla 2

Flotilla 2 was the first LCI Flotilla to sail to the Mediterranean Sea and into war. It sailed from Little Creek, Virginia, for Bermuda on February 18, 1943. At the beginning of the voyage, it was clear and cold at 13 degrees. Within hours they encountered a snow storm followed by sleet. It was miserable. Ted Ponseti, Signalman 3rd Class, chopped away at thick ice forming on the 12 inch signal light.

The Flotilla encountered gale force winds of sixty to seventy knots and waves running from 25 to 40 feet high. The waves battered the little LCIs that were not designed to cross oceans. Needless to say, sea sickness ravaged the crews.

In Hamilton, Bermuda, Flotilla 2 made repairs, took on water and supplies and otherwise recovered from the beating at sea.

The respite would not last long. Most of the Flotilla tied up at the Tender Piers at the Naval Air Station, U.S. Operating Base, Bermuda. Division Ten of the Flotilla tied up alongside the Task Force Flagship, the USS *Mattole*, in the anchorage.

Many crewmen of Flotilla 2 went on liberty in Hamilton on February 27, 1943. Ted Ponseti declined to go, opting to try his hand at catching lobster. He loaned his \$14.00 custom made blues to his shipmate **Adam Picozzi** from Cleveland, Ohio.

At about 2100, the liberty boat from the USS *Mattole* brought back about sixty sailors from shore, including approximately forty sailors from LCI Division 10 and Command Staff. The boat was swamped in high winds and twenty-three LCIs drowned including Adam Picozzi wearing Ted Ponseti's uniform. Some of those killed were strong swimmers. Ponseti reflected on the fact that he could not swim at all.

Flotilla 2 had endured her first casualties. They were not combat casualties, but nevertheless it was a heavy blow to the Flotilla. The unfortunate accident delayed the departure of the Flotilla because they had to find crew replacements at the US Navy Base, Bermuda. Those drowned were as follows:

**Ens. Lawrence Raymond Waller, LCI(L) 219**

**Rymon, J.A., MoMM2c, LCI(L) 212**

**Roberts, Earl L., MoMM2c, LCI(L) 218**

**Chamberlain, LeRoy R., SC2c, LCI(L) 213**

**Picozzi, Adam T., SM3c, LCI(L) 214**

**Gray, John "J"., SK3c, Flotilla Staff**

**Gragg, Robert C., RM3c, LCI(L) 215**

**Jensen, Alvin C., SM3c, LCI(L) 213**

**Merrill, Otis H., SC3c, LCI(L) 211**

**Radford, Clifford H., F1c, Flotilla Staff**

**Kapff, Richard A., S1c, LCI(L) 214**

**Light, W.A., S1c, LCI(L) 212**

**Albert, Lonnie L., S2c, LCI(L) 213**

**Bloom, Russel L., S2c, LCI(L) 219**

**Farrell, Vincent C., S2c, LCI(L) 213**

**Redding, Grant Russel, S2c, LCI(L) 215**

**Twiggs, Jack P., S2c, LCI(L) 214**

**Kennedy, Charles H., F2c, LCI(L) 214**

**Hayes, James A., F2c, LCI(L) 216**

**Muth, David H., AS, LCI(L) 218**

**Leonard, Thomas L., AS, LCI(L) 215**

**Jones, Robert L., MA2c, LCI(L) 216**

**Stafford, Willis, MA2c, LCI(L) 212**

**Riley, James Lee, MA3c, LCI(L) 215**

## **Flotilla 2 in the Mediterranean**

Flotilla 2 sailed into the Mediterranean and on to Tunisia, Africa. It served with distinction in the Sicily operations of July and August, 1943, and continued with operations along the west coast of Italy through March, 1944.

Two LCIs of Flotilla 2 were sunk—LCI 1 at Bizerte and LCI 32 at Anzio. LCI 1 was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its action during the landings at Sicily. In the Mediterranean, crewmen of Flotilla 2 were awarded two Navy Cross medals, six Legion of Merit medals, three Navy-Marine Corps medals, four Silver Star medals and forty eight Purple Heart medals. (I will cover the substantial history of Flotilla 2 in the Mediterranean in another report.)

## **Flotilla 2 at Normandy**

On April 20, 1944, Flotilla 2 joined Task Force 81.13 and sailed for the United Kingdom. There they trained and reorganized for the Normandy invasion. Ten LCIs of Flotilla 2 were put under British command and successfully landed troops on Sword Beach on D-Day. The remainder of Flotilla 2 sailed from Plymouth and Salcome, England on June 5, 1944, bound for Utah Beach with members of the Fourth Infantry Division.

With the destroyer USS *O'Brian* as escort, LCI 217 led 21 LCIs of Flotilla 2 in two columns towards Red Beach Sector of Utah Beach on June 6, 1944. These LCIs were numbers 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, 29, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 231, 232, 325, 326, 349, 350 and 419.

These two columns of Flotilla 2 LCIs were followed by another task force including 23 LCIs of the Green Beach assault group of Utah Beach commanded by **J.S. Bresman USCG**.

The Utah Beach assault groups did not experience the level of slaughter and devastation as their counterparts did on Omaha Beach. However, five vessels, including LCI 232, were victims of German mines laid in the waters of the Cardonnet Bank on D-Day. Three other vessels were struck in that channel on subsequent days. German planes dropped mines nightly. On D day, the twenty-two LCIs of Flotilla 2 successfully offloaded their Army troops onto smaller LCMs and LCVPs about 1,000 yards off of Red Beach Sector of Utah Beach. The after action report of LCI 217 indicates this occurred at 1042 hours.

While offloading troops, SM3c Ponseti overheard Navy personnel telling his Skipper that the area was heavily mined and that they needed to depart the area as soon as they disembarked their troops. A Lieutenant Commander serving as an LCI Group Commander was stationed in the Conn with the Skipper of LCI 214. Ponseti overheard the Group Commander ask his Skipper "Do you want to get a closer look at the beach?" Ponseti heard his Skipper respond in the affirmative but he did not know if his Skipper enthusiastically endorsed the move. His Skipper then turned to Ponseti and ordered him to signal the LCIs behind them to follow LCI 214.

LCI 214 led the column of LCIs towards the beach. LCI 232, commanded by **Lt. (jg) William R. Watson**, was directly behind LCI 214. Ponseti did not know why they came near to the beach because he did not believe that there was much to see.

After moving forward for a distance, LCI 214 turned and headed back out to sea with a column of LCIs following. Shortly after LCI 214 made the turn, Ponseti heard a loud explosion and turned in time to see LCI 232 get blown out of the water by a mine. It immediately rolled over with the bottom of its hull facing skyward and sank within five minutes.

The crewmen below deck did not have a chance. Half of the crew was killed. Ponseti observed the officers on the Conn of LCI 214 stand speechless. LCI 216, following LCI 232 came to the rescue. **Ensign Mueller** of LCI 216 was commended for heroism for his attempt to rescue crewmen of the ill fated LCI 232. An official report dated September 16, 1944, long after the incident, simply states that LCI 232 detonated a mine while returning to the Transport Area. The only LCI of Flotilla 2 to submit an after action report for D Day was LCI 217 which mentions nothing of the sinking of LCI 232. If SM3c Ted Ponseti's recollection is correct, the destruction of LCI 232 and loss of crew was avoidable and therefore decidedly tragic.

The crewmen of LCI 232 killed as the result of the mine were:

**Huskinson, Robert G., Ensign**  
**Johnson, Roger F., MoMM2c**  
**Penewell, Mack, S1c**  
**Dague, Howard J., S1c**  
**Ellis, Walton K., RM1c**  
**Glover, Leland A., F1c**  
**Henke, Wilbert B., MoMM2c**  
**Kelley, George A., MoMM1c**  
**Mett, Robert A., EM3c**  
**Petricca, Frank J., GM3c**  
**Rector, Charlie O., PhM2c**  
**Shroves, John H., S1c**  
**Souza, Frank, Cox.**  
**Weinstein, Raphael, HA1c**

After disembarking her troops on D-Day, LCI 219 remained in the Transport Area and at 1252 hours they approached LST 282 for orders. At 1715, LCI 219 tied up along the port side of LST 282 and at 1756 was boarded by Commander Guillot, Commander of LST Flotilla 10 with seven staff officers and sixteen enlisted men.

The staff officers of Flotilla 10 were **Lt. Commander Perry, Lt. (jg) Morgan, Lt. (jg) Spencer, Lt. (jg) Fox, Ensign Schleifer, Ensign Stellhorn,** and **Ensign Gallagher**. Their task was to oversee the placement of pontoon causeways on Utah Beach. **Ens. Bill Gallagher** was born in Bozeman, Montana on January 1, 1920, and was raised in Sacramento, California. He attended St. Mary's College near Oakland where he majored in history. He enlisted as a Naval Reservist in December, 1941, while attending St. Mary's and graduated in 1943. He then attended Officer Candidate School at Notre Dame where he spent the first month

as a Seaman and the next three months as a Midshipman. Afterwards, he attended Communications School in Norfolk before being assigned to LST Flotilla 10 in Panama City, Florida. He was assigned to the Flotilla Flagship, LST 46, which joined a convoy at Nova Scotia and sailed to England in January, 1944. He was housed in a Quonset hut in Plymouth and continued training with the Flotilla including "Operation Tiger" at Slapton Sands. On June, 5, 1944 he sailed with the rest of LST Flotilla 10 Headquarters Staff to Utah Beach on LST 282.

On June 11, 1944, LCI 219 was still supporting the operations of the twenty four men of LST Flotilla 10 Command Staff. These men had been crammed into LCI 219 since the afternoon of June 6. They were returning from Omaha Beach with men they had picked up and were entering the Utah Beach area of operations when at approximately 0345 in the morning there was a sudden air raid that gave the men on watch no time to sound the alarm.

A German aircraft dropped a bomb that struck the water a mere ten feet or so from LCI 219. It riddled approximately twenty-five feet of the hull with shrapnel causing many eight or nine inch holes. LCI 219 Engineering Officer, Lt. William Becker and Ensign Bill Gallagher from the LST Flotilla 10 Command Staff were thrown from their bunks into the darkness below deck.

Lt. Becker grabbed his helmet and life preserver and scrambled topside to his battle station without his shoes. Everyone he saw coming out of the crew quarters was injured. He then hurried to the engine room where he found a fire blazing, all generators out and every sailor of the "Black Gang" injured. Their pumps were useless without power.

He reported to the Skipper who instructed him to survey LCI 219 for additional damage. He counted a total of four fires. The 219 took in water slowly at first but steadily it listed to port.

When Ensign Gallagher was knocked out of his bunk amidships, he grabbed his survival kit, a small army bag with personal articles. He threw it around his neck with his life preserver and made his way topside. He found confusion on deck in the darkness with many wounded sailors.

Gallagher witnessed the heroic actions of the LCI 219 Skipper attempting to save his ship and crew. Gallagher's superior officer, Lieutenant Commander Perry, sat on deck bleeding with his pant leg rolled up. Perry told Gallagher to go back below deck and search for survivors.

Gallagher made his way below deck and discovered the lifeless body of **Stewards Mate Jackson** from the LST Flotilla 10 Command Staff. Upon returning topside, he was ordered to return once again below deck with other sailors and a gurney to recover the body of Jackson. A determined effort was made but Gallagher and fellow sailors could not maneuver the gurney and body through the dark LCI that was now listing dangerously to port. Jackson would go down with the ship.

Lt. Becker could only find eight uninjured sailors to fight the

fires. The decks were getting hot as they fought the losing battle. At about 0400, Sub Chaser 1291 came alongside LCI 219 to pick up wounded and a fire rescue party boarded the LCI. Together, the sailors from the two vessels subdued much of the fires—but the water kept pouring in on the port side.

Ensign Gallagher finally boarded a British DUKW with several other sailors and was taken to an LST for the journey back to England.

The LCI Flotilla 2 after-action report has a list of casualties of the crew of LCI 219 but had no information regards to casualties from LST Flotilla 10 Command Staff. Bill Gallagher had no access to a casualty list. However, he saw the body of Stewards Mate Jackson and was told that both Signalman Kazanjian and Lt. (jg) Spencer died from the wounds they received on LCI 219.

Spencer was a native of New York and graduate of Columbia University. If Gallagher's information is correct, at least three sailors from LST Flotilla 10 Command Staff lost their lives on LCI 219.

Lt. Becker noted that all living sailors on LCI 219 were evacuated and that it took about 90 minutes from the time of the bombing until LCI 219 rolled over on its back. Becker was transferred to an LST for his return voyage to England. He spent several weeks in four different hospitals before being shipped back to the United States.

Ensign Gallagher suffered no serious injury on LCI 219. Two months later he was assigned to a British LCI during landings at San Raphael in Southern France. On August 15, 1944 he observed the destruction of LST 282 on which he had served on D Day at Utah Beach before transferring to LCI 219. He watched as LST 282 packed with soldiers and sailors was demolished by a Henschel Rocket Powered Guided Bomb dropped by a German JU88 Bomber. The bomb was a crude but effective version of the smart bombs of today.

In the after action report of Flotilla 2 dated September 16, 1944, it is noted that three men and the Commanding Officer of LCI 219 as well as the Commanding Officer of SC-1291 were commended in separate letters for their efforts to keep LCI 219 afloat on June 11, 1944 after it was bombed.

The three sailors commended on LCI 219 were awarded the Bronze Star. They were three of the seven crewmen killed that night: **Lester Bumps, Cyril O'Conner** and **Rolan Sikes**.

**Lt. (jg) Albert Joseph Corsi**, the original Skipper of LCI 219, was still the heroic officer in command of LCI 219 when it sunk. The seven crewmen of LCI 219 who were killed that night of June 11, 1944 are as follows:

**Wiles, Johnston B., Lt. (jg)**

**O'Conner, Cyril J., BM1c**

**Dorcey, Cornelius b., Cox**

**Sikes, Rolan C. Jr., MoMM1c**

**Bumps, Lester R., S1c**

**Longman, John M., S1c**

**Combs, Albert F., F2c**

May they rest in peace.

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## Sources:

Today there are few records regarding the sinking of LCI 232 and LCI 219 off of Utah Beach on June 6 and June 11, 1944, respectively. There are no current members of the USS LCI National Association who were crewmembers of these ships. However, there is a member of our LCI Association who witnessed the sinking of LCI 232—**Ted Ponseti** of LCI 214. I was also introduced to **Bill Gallagher**, an eye witness to the sinking of LCI 219, by **Jonathan Shleifer**, an Associate Member of our LCI Association. **Harry Shleifer**, Jonathan's father, who passed away in December, 2003, served with Bill Gallagher as part of the Command Staff of LST Flotilla 10 that was stationed on LCI 219 at the time of her demise.

In addition, I found a narrative of **Lt. William E. Becker, USN**, who served aboard LCI 219 as the Engineering Officer. In this narrative, given by Becker at the Office of Naval Records and Library on August 5, 1944, he describes in detail the sinking of LCI 219. I located this narrative through my computer online at a very informative website – “Hyper War” that contains official military histories and source documents.

Another source for this report is the Deck Log for LST 282 which I found through my computer online on “Thomas Aubut's LST 282 site”. I derived much of my information from the excellent War Diary, U.S. LCI (L) Flotilla Two, which was researched and organized by Flotilla 2 members including **Sam Boyle, Dean Helm, Roger LaBurdy, Culver McCoy** and **L.M. “Red” Moyle**. This War Diary was produced for members of Flotilla 2 in memory of their first commander, **Vice Admiral Lorenzo Sherwood Sabin Jr.**, 1899-1988. I was given a copy of this document several years ago by **James J. Mrzlok, LCI 8**.



**From the Boxing Ring to LCIs:**

Former Heavy weight Champion **Jack Dempsey**, "The Manassas Mauler", seen here as a Commander in the U. S. Coast Guard, visits the crew of LCI 83, at Base Harbor, Dartmouth, England, as they prepare for the Normandy Invasion.

# ★ SEA STORIES ★

*Here they are! In response to our request for sea stories we received these three. We can use some more in the next issue, so get out that pen and start writing.*

## **AN UNUSUALLY BORING LIBERTY**

*A Sea Story from George H. Weber*

We had gone from Algiers Naval Base—across the river from New Orleans—to Panama Bay, Florida for our shakedown cruise. We arrived at our destination just as it was getting dark. This was August 1943, and the bay was full of floating tufts of foamy, smelly brown material that was apparently released by a large pulp-mill located in the town. This was pre-EPA and such river and ocean fouling was common.

By the time we had reached our assigned anchorage and dropped anchor it was dark. In the failing light as we were arriving we had seen a wooden pier jutting out into the bay, so our liberty boat headed for that pier, which had a navigation light on its outward end. We all climbed up the ladder to the pier surface and headed landward. The boat headed back to the ship, planning to return shortly after midnight to pick us up.

It was a long pier, but we shortly discovered that it was an abandoned one. A section of it had been totally removed—probably in order to prevent people from using the pier as it did seem a bit rickety. So we were prevented from reaching shore and had a boring 5 hour wait until our boat returned. No cell phones in those days, so we lay down on the wooden pier and tried to get some shut-eye as we waited. During daylight the next day we saw the functioning pier, and did finally get ashore. But that first liberty attempt resulted in a seldom seen occurrence—a totally sober liberty party returning to our ship!

## **A MESSAGE FROM MOM**

*Here's a sea story from William Wertz, Lebanon, PA, who served on LCI 464, from her commissioning in 1943 until the end of the war.*

Our skipper ran a tight ship (no alcoholic beverages, no mascots etc.), but was very efficient. I was a Motor Machinists Mate, Second Class, on duty in the engine room. We were anchored in the Marshall Islands where we were preparing for our next invasion.

The phone rang. A voice from the bridge said,

“Wertz, report to the bridge”.

Immediately, I thought,

“Oh God, what now?”

There was the skipper, looking down at me as I climbed the ladder to the bridge. When I got there, the skipper said,

“We have a message for you from the Admiral on the command ship saying:

“Tell Petty Officer Wertz the Navy will try to do better the next time she sends you cookies to see that they do not get smashed” The last time I wrote my mother I told her not to send any more cookies because when they arrived they were nothing but crumbs in a very mangled bag.

To this day my mother couldn't tell me who she wrote. Was it Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox?; Admiral Nimitz?—or her congressman?

# AND THEN THERE WAS MILKY WAY

*James D. Robertson SM/2c*

*The Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, NM*

Because we were given an exceptionally short notice to get ready for immediate departure and therefore given priority to resupply in the most expeditious manner possible, we went from ship to ship picking up what we needed. A tanker topped off our fuel tanks; ammunition came from another ship; dry stores from a couple of others and finally we got to the refrigerator ship for as much perishable food as we could carry.

The concept of freezing food for preservation was not well understood then. Only certain foods were allowed to be frozen – the rest remained in cold storage. If something in cold storage accidentally got frozen it was disposed of as contaminated. So it was that several large boxes of Milky Way candy bars, accidentally frozen were on the way overboard.

Overboard! We hadn't seen candy of any sort since we came out to the South Pacific more than a year ago!

Even though I had never eaten a frozen Milky Way bar, Milky Way and I came into the world at about the same time; the bar in 1923 and me in 1925. Looking at the candy bar in its frost-

covered green and brown wrapper brought back wonderful memories of my childhood. I could not let those bars go over the side even if it killed me!

I figured if Mark Twain could, as was said, "Come in with Haley's Comet and go out with Haley's Comet" I could come in with Milky Way and go out with Milky Way.

So I grabbed a handful out of one of the boxes and took them to the Old Man who, after taking one himself, handed them out to the duty watch. We all took a chance and bit into them at the same time. Wow! Real chocolate, chewy inside, cold in the mouth—it was ecstasy, great fortune had indeed, smiled upon us.

With permission I gathered up the boxes and brought them aboard. Unfortunately our problem lay with our extremely limited storage. We understood regular rations got first priority which was only logical. The alternative was obvious – we had to eat them. (At great personal sacrifice of course).



# My Father: Skipper of LCI 44

by  
**Hugh P. Savage**

My Dad, **Hugh M. Savage**, was assigned as Commanding Officer of LCI 44 (Landing Craft, Infantry), an early design English model with a square conning tower. He took it from Little Creek, VA across the Atlantic Ocean stopping in Bermuda on the way. It must have been a horrific passage. LCI's are not known for their seaworthiness. Their small size and flat bottoms made for a rocky ride, especially in heavy seas.

I remember Dad talking about having been in Bizerte, Tunisia, Sardinia, and Anzio, Italy. An extract of the history of LCI's indicates that the LCI 44 was commissioned on December 26, 1942 and participated in the Sicilian occupation between 9 and 15 July 1943, the Salerno landings 9 to 21 September, 1943, Anzio-Nettuno advanced landings 22 January to 1 March, 1944, Elba and Pianosa landings on 17 Jun 1944 and the invasion of Southern France. Dad was transferred back to the States just after his ship completed the Anzio landings.

I think he had the time of his life in the Mediterranean. It seems he was well-liked and respected by his crew. I have spoken with some of his former crewmembers. One was **Norman Olivetti**, a Signalman on the LCI 44. Mr. Olivetti told me that the ocean voyage was so rough that the milk they had stored was churned to butter. He noted that there were 22 enlisted men and 3 officers on board. The other officers were **Mr. Woodruff**, the executive officer, and **Warren Hall** from Fargo, ND. **Adolph "Cal" Callner** was a Quartermaster who volunteered to be the ship's cook; a calling he continued after the war according to a newspaper clipping Dad had in his personal papers.

The night I flew back from Viet Nam, I had a date to meet Cal and his wife for dinner in New York City. I was unable to notify my parents when I would be returning. Our plane arrived at Fort Dix at the beginning of a long 4th of July weekend. No one was left on Post to process us out. It looked like I would be stuck on Post for the entire weekend so I did not call home not wanting to get their hopes up. Finally a Major granted us all a three-day pass so then I called home to ask my parents to pick me up. As I remember, we went straight to dinner with Cal and his wife. I could not have been much company for the last time I had slept was at least 48 hours before and half a world away.



*Ensign Hugh M. Savage, 1942*

Another crewman, **Bob McGlory**, was in the engine room. He remembers getting lost on the way to their first landing. They zigged when the convoy zagged. During the landing they nearly collided with an LST (Landing Ship Tank, much larger than an LCI). Mr. McGlory received a command in the engine room, "All reverse—full". When he came topside to see why such an unusual message had been sent, he saw the LST close enough to touch.

At Anzio, one of their tasks was to evacuate prisoners of war. The Italians were delighted to be out of the war. They sang and celebrated on their way to captivity. The Germans were arrogant and sullen.

**Leo Martel** was one of the original crew members during the LCI 44's shakedown cruise in Little Creek. He wrote me he was age 19 when he enlisted and said that he considered Dad not only his commanding officer but also his guidance counselor and Father at sea.

"You see," he wrote, "we were a family living so close on a small flat bottom boat that we came to know each other pretty well.

I always said we had the best commanding officer in the navy for your Dad commanded respect and he also gave respect to each and every one of us aboard LCI 44."

It was a wonderful thing for me to hear about my Dad.



# A Thought from Chaplain Mike Gatton

## The Daffodil Principle



Spring is threatening to arrive in Kentucky. The redbud trees have blossomed, the accompanying cold weather chilled the air, and the daffodils are in full bloom. There's an old home place that sits beside the road that enters my farm—nothing left there but a front stoop and a stand of daffodils. I often wonder about the one who planted those bulbs.

Jaroldeen Edwards tells this story. Several times her daughter had telephoned to say, "Mother, you must come see the daffodils before they are over." She wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive. Nevertheless, she promised. The day dawned cold and rainy. But, a promise was a promise, so she drove there. When she finally walked into her daughter's house and hugged and greeted her grandchildren, she said, "Forget the daffodils! There is nothing in the world except you and these children that I want to see bad enough to drive another inch!" Edward's daughter would hear none of it. She pleaded with her mother, "You will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience."

After another twenty minute drive, the car turned onto a small gravel road near a small church. On the far side of the church, there was a hand-lettered sign that read, "Daffodil Garden." When they turned a corner of the path, they beheld the most glorious sight. It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it down over the mountain peak and slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns—great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, saffron, and butter yellow. Each different colored variety was planted as a group so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue.

There were five acres of flowers. "But who has done this?" Jaroldeen asked her daughter. "It's just one woman," Carolyn answered. "She lives on the property. That's her home." Next to the house was a sign that read: "Answers to the questions I know you are asking—50,000 bulbs, one at a time, by one woman. Two hands, two feet, and a very little brain." It was what Edwards came to call "The Daffodil Principle."

Here was a woman whose name was unknown that over a period of 40 years had been planting daffodil bulbs one at a time to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure hill top. Just by planting one bulb at a time, year after year, she had changed the world in which she lived. She had created something of indescribable magnificence, beauty, and inspiration.

The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration. That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time—often just one baby-step at a time—and learning to love the doing. When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world!

And, rather than worrying about the time we have remaining, every one of us could start tomorrow. It's so pointless to think of the lost hours of yesterdays. The way to make learning a lesson of celebration instead of a cause for regret is to only ask, "How can I put this to use today?"

There is no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when? Your life will always be filled with challenges. Admit it—then, decide to be happy anyway. Treasure every moment that you have! Treasure it even more because you shared it with someone special—your spouse, your family, your crew, your forever friend. You have changed the world by your life and service. Never doubt that! And, there is no better time than right now to be happy. I hope the daffodils remind you of that.

Agape, Mike

# IN MEMORIAM

*“Almighty and eternal God, from whose love we cannot be parted, either by death or life;  
hear our prayers and thanksgiving for those whom we here remember.”  
“Grant unto sorrowing family and shipmates the blessing of your peace that passes understanding.”*

LCI 32  
Patrick McDonough

LCI 70  
William G. Randall

LCI 72  
Anthony Bisbano

LCI 224  
James L. Conglianese

LCI 329  
Charles Doerr

LCI 39  
Henry A. Mullins

LCI 450  
Michael Ross

LCI 450  
Edward Bush

LCI 471  
Robert Stanley Hudgins

LCI 471  
Robert Dotson

LCI 498  
Allan L. Stock

LCI 499  
Robert F. Sayles

LCI 558  
Kenneth C. Wiesmore

LCI 558  
Herbert W. Hoover

LCI 590  
Lawrence M. Caldwell

LCI 630  
Frank Maggion

LCI 631  
David G. Hilson

LCI 678  
Horace A. McMullan

LCI711  
Russell W. Hartwell

LCI 748  
Randolph Baldwin

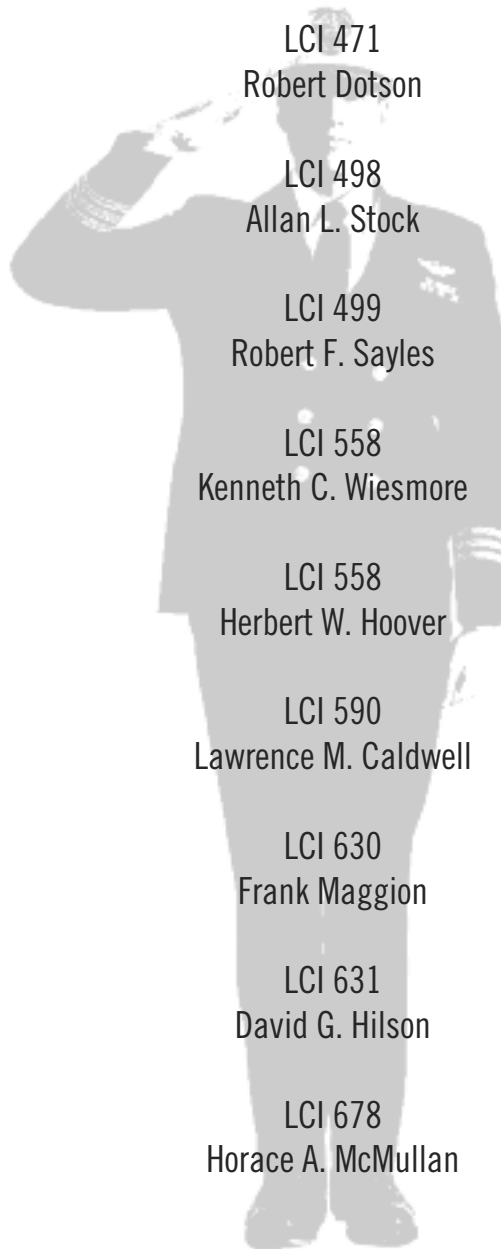
LCI 812  
Reverend Jesse Essinger

LCI 974  
John E. Acuff

LCI 1053  
John E. Norvell III

LCI 1094  
Lloyd F. Anderson

LCI 1096  
John C. Testerman





**"The Squared-Away Crew of the 1017"**

# My Wartime Experiences Aboard USS LCI (G) 373

By  
**Albert D. Divincenzo**  
MoMM3/C  
Dearborn, Michigan



**M**Y FIRST TASTE OF NAVY LIFE CAME WHEN I RECEIVED A PHYSICAL EXAMINATION 28 APRIL 1944. Stripped to my bare bottom, I walked through a single line with medics on both sides of me. Very familiar to all inductees! When the Doctor examined my knees with his little hammer he did not get any response. Why? They were swollen with water on both knees from working in the coal mines.

“Well,” the Doctor said. “You are going into the Navy; you will not have to kneel down.” Down came his approval stamp. I had just passed my physical and was in the United States Navy.

Leaving boot camp from Bainbridge, Maryland, on 17 June 1944, we arrived at Shoemaker, California three days later. I was boarded LST 608 for transportation to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

We left the States 15 July 1944 from San Pedro, California. Part of our cargo was beer, and while standing watch we were privileged in having a cold beer cooled by tying a rope around the bottle and dropping it into the sea.

We Arrived at Oahu, Hawaii, 27 July 1944, where I became a crew member of LCI (G) 373 on 31 August 1944. When we left on 11 September 1944, I asked a ship mate **C.W Norton** if we were going on maneuvers.

“No,” he answered, “The next thing you will see is the real thing.”

Three days out at sea we were informed by **Captain Harkavy** that we were sailing to take part in the initial invasion of Leyte Gulf 20 October 1944 in the Philippines. Then he proceeded to address the crew, standing about half way up the ladder to the bridge.

“I am above you, you are below me,” he informed us. “You will not address me as ‘Skipper’ or ‘Captain’, only as Mr. Harkavy.

“Hell.” I thought, “We must not be human beings, and Napoleon had been resurrected!”

On 11 September 1944, we crossed the International Dateline so the ship’s crew qualified as members of the Realm of the Golden Dragon. Then on 1 October 1944, we who had never done so before earned the distinction of becoming “Shellbacks” when we crossed the equator. The ship’s crew, myself included, and some of the officers were initiated as “Shellbacks” and were required by “King Neptune” to do such things as drinking powered milk from a bottle with a condom as a nipple. Down to the forward compartment we went, wearing just a pair of short pants. We were released one at a time and as we came up on deck, we were hit by the fire hose full blast. Down on our knees we went—then on our hands and knees we crawled through a line with the fire hose never leaving us for a second. From each side those who had previously been initiated as Shellbacks let us have it. Some were slapping us on the head with a four inch paint brush full of green paint. Others got a few licks on our rear ends. It took a long time before I was able to get the green paint off my scalp and my body.

On the morning of 20 October 1944, **Harold Levine** was standing in line for breakfast in front of me. He said “I don’t feel like eating this morning.”

“Levine, I replied, “I am just as scared as you are, but if you’re not going to eat your steak, I will.” Mission accomplished!

During the invasion we suffered a few minor casualties. **GM3/c W. H. Darby** received burns on his right hand while handling hot 40 MM shells; **S2/c V.G. Dozier** suffered flak burn around right eye caused by rocket fire and **S1/c W. R. Erno** burned his right hand from handling hot 40 MM shell casings.

We left Leyte Gulf 25 October 1944, heading for Hollandia New Guinea, arriving there 30 October 1944. We then went to Moratia 11 November 1944 where we were scheduled for another invasion, but one of our quads was out, so we went into dry-dock in Waindia, on 19 November 1944. Somehow, in the middle of the Pacific we had managed to run over a log putting our

propeller and one of our quad engines out of commission. Mr. Harkavy got into trouble with the Seabee, with his sarcastic remarks while they were directing the ship into dry dock. After we were secured in the dock, the Seabee officer came aboard looking for Mr. Harkavy, but he went into his quarters and locked the door.

We finally went on maneuvers after the invasion of Luzon Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, preparing for the invasion of Okinawa although we did not know it at the time. The convoy we were in consisted of LCIs and LSTs. The sea gave the convoy and its crews the fiercest ride they had ever had. It was one that will remain in their minds the rest of their lives.

**Dale Teegarden**, a MoMM3/c made a deal with Mr. Harkavy, when asked to make some lounge chairs. The deal was that Mr. Harkavy would give him a fifth of State Side whiskey and that the lounge chairs would be used by all ships personnel. In other words they would not be stenciled “OFFICERS ONLY.” Teegarden made three or four lounge chairs from the frames of our bunk beds.

At the time we were anchored at one of the Islands. A few days later going on top side, there were the lounge chairs stenciled “OFFICERS ONLY.” It did not take long for Mr. Harkavy to break his promise. When I brought Teegarden’s attention to the chairs he used language not suitable for family reading and told me he would not make any more lounge chairs.

As might be expected, the first night out at sea the lounge chairs disappeared. The next morning Mr. Harkavy called quarters, “What happened to those lounge chairs?”

No one said a word, but everyone knew where those lounge chairs were.

“Teegarden, I want you to make a few more lounge chairs.” said Mr. Harkavy.

To which Teegarden replied, “I am a Motor Machinist Mate and I do not believe that is part of my duties.”

He refused to make any more lounge chairs.

As young whipper snappers at the time, we considered Teegarden an old man. He was in his late thirties. Shipmate **Joseph Canzone**, other ship mates, and I would get together and ribbed him, asking, “What are you doing in the service at your age?”

His story went something like this: “The family was having dinner on a Sunday. Teegarden and his brother-in-law, who was

much younger than he was, were feeling patriotic, talking each other into joining up and fighting the Japs. The next morning they went to the recruiting office Teegarden was certain he would not pass the physical.

With a group of us standing around listening to him, Teegarden dropped his pants showing a large scar saying,

“Well here I am and my brother-in-law failed his physical!”

We had a good laugh over his story and the ribbing stopped. Joseph Canzone has told this story many times as I have.”

When, Mr. Harkavy made Lieutenant he was ordered off the ship and was on his way to the States. Once again and for the last time he stood half way up the ladder to the bridge. Standing there on the ladder he addressed the crew telling us that he was leaving the ship and going back to the States. He told us how sorry he was to be leaving us and that the Captain should be the last one to leave the ship.

Up to this point I do not believe any of the crew believed a word he was saying, until he said that we would be in good hands since the ship would be turned over to our new Captain, **Lt. J.G Moss P. Mills**. That was the last I heard of Mr. Harkavy, until 12 May 1992, when my wife **Rose** and I made a trip to San Antonio Texas, to see a doctor for surgical replacement of her left shoulder. Before we made the trip I was looking through my Veteran of Foreign Wars magazine the May issue, and ran across a name and found the phone number of a shipmate, **Seaman James Grim** who served his time on the LCI (G) 372, another ship in our Flotilla.

I telephoned him and in our phone conversation he asked me if the stories he had heard about our Skipper were true, and if he was really was a SOB as he had heard. I told him I had no idea what he heard but probably most of the stories were true and that he had his personality and character correct.

We were not aware that the entire Flotilla had heard of Mr. Harkavy. It came as a surprise to me that Mr. Harkavy was that well known. A few years later I did meet James Grim at one of our USS LCI National Association reunions.

After Mr. Mills became our Captain we finally had movies aboard ship, and the morale on the ship was one hundred percent better. We finally found someone with whom we could talk and who would not give a sarcastic answer. Everything that, we could not have under Mr. Harkavy, Captain Mills provided for us. I do not recall anyone not respecting or saying anything unkind

about Captain Mills or any of the other officers after Mr. Harkavy left. I cannot say or write words that could describe the admiration and feeling that came over the entire crew after Mr. Mills became our Captain.

Upon our arrival at Okinawa on 25 March 1945, we almost froze, even though the temperature was in the 70's.

My battle station was phone talker on the bow 40MM. At general quarters we wore fur lined jackets and pants, a face mask, and gloves to keep us warm. On regular duty in the engine room, we were fully clothed, long sleeves shirt, dungarees, socks and shoes. Prior to Okinawa, in the engine room, we wore cut-off dungarees and wooden sandals.

When we worked with an Underwater Demolition Team (UDT), our job was to give fire support with our 40MM guns, firing over the heads of the swimmers to cover their activities and reducing enemy fire. **William Darby** was our gunner, my role as phone talker gave me a good view of what was going on. There were a great number of mines drifting in the water; most of them were destroyed by mine sweepers. We did destroy a few of them with our 40MM. These maneuvers or assignments were carried out twice daily, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.

I will never forget seeing how the swimmers were picked up. The swimmers would swim back from the beach out of the line of fire, line up in a straight line as much as possible parallel with the beach. This was done for a very good reason. The LCVP coxswain would have his pick-up boat at full throttle with a rubber raft alongside facing away from the beach. One person would be in the raft. As the boat went by each swimmer, this person in the rubber raft would use a sling and with one motion the swimmer would be pulled into the rubber raft.

I never saw them miss a swimmer, and I was always amazed watching them. My feeling was and still is that they did not receive the recognition they deserved.

Friday, 6 April 1945, LST 447 was hit by a Kamikaze plane, and they had to abandon ship. We were ordered to pick up survivors and we did get five of them. Later we heard that the 447 was sunk by destroyer fire as unsalvageable.

**SC1/c Joseph (Sandy) Sandeffer's** battle station was on the aft 20MM on the starboard side. Every time Sandy's name comes up I think of his courage and excellent shooting.



On 10 April 1945, we were at general quarters, patrolling off Ie Shima, when a Jap Val flew over tipping his wings, probably to divert our attention. Then suddenly he made a sharp turn and went into a Kamikaze dive toward our ship. We could not train our 40MM guns on him, and the larger ships could not fire fearing of hitting our ship. Our only fire power was the 20MM on the fan tail, manned by Sandy, and he brought the Kamikaze down. The plane hit the water, blowing up just 200 yards off our starboard side. The rising sun emblem looked awfully large on his wings when he hit the water and exploded. I also corresponded with Sandy until we lost him 12 October 1999 at the age of 73.

Our stay at Okinawa was from 26th March to the 14th June 1945, almost three months. We arrived at Pearl Harbor 11th July 1945 after the atomic bombs were dropped, and we left Pearl Harbor 29th October 1945, arriving at Guam, 23rd November 1945.

I left the ship on 9th December 1945 for the U. S. Naval Station Center on Guam. I went aboard the USS *Salt Lake City*, leaving Guam 19th December 1945 and arriving at Treasure Island 31st December 1945. I was freezing in my white uniform. We were issued new blue uniforms and Pea Coats because ship's company on LST 608, the ship that took us from to California to Pearl Harbor, stole all our blues. We were given a 48 hour pass. I received an Honorable Discharge 12th January 1946. I thank our Lord for bringing me back home. I could never express my feelings about being home with my lovely wife Rose and our son, **Albert Jr.**

I still correspond with Captain Mills, as I do with my other shipmates **Jimmie Prime** and **Joseph Canzone**.

My shipmate and very good friend Radioman 2/C Jimmie A. Prime wrote a very good article entitled "The Last Assault of LCI (G) 373", which was printed in the October 2007 issue of *Elsie Item*.

In 1991, I became a proud, charter member of the USS LCI National Association. I attended the St. Louis meeting in April, 1996. My wife Rose and I met my shipmates Jimmie Prime, Joseph Canzone his wife Frances, and **Joe Dominick**. That was the first and the last time that we saw each other since leaving the ship. We had a wonderful and a very enjoyable visit, dinner, dance, and a great deal of conversation.

*Upon returning from WWII, Al decided that he did not want to go back to coal mining. After using his "52-20" allowance (remember that? Unemployment compensation for Vets of \$20 per week for 52 weeks) he and his wife moved to Michigan where he worked for the Ford Company as a tool and die maker for thirty years, retiring in 1985.*

# USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

If you served aboard an LCI during WWII, are a relative of someone who served aboard an LCI, or if you just have a desire to have a part in remembering those who so served, you are invited to join our association.

Please complete this form and mail it to the address indicated below with your first year's dues.

DUES ARE \$25.00 PER YEAR, June 1 through May 31.  
Membership includes a subscription to *Elsie Item*, our quarterly publication.

## I. For application if you served on an LCI:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Which LCI did you serve on? \_\_\_\_\_ What was your Rank/Rate? \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation or Former Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Wife's Name \_\_\_\_\_

## II. For Application if you did not serve on an LCI:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
Are you related to someone who served on an LCI?  Yes  No  
If so, what is the relationship? (i.e. father, grandfather, uncle, etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
What is/was his name? \_\_\_\_\_  
On which LCI did he serve? \_\_\_\_\_  
Have you served in the U.S. military?  Yes  No If so, what branch? \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this application with your check (\$25) made payable to  
USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION to:

**USS LCI National Association**  
c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc.  
101 Rice Bent Way, Unit #6



# The Combat Art of Dwight Shepler

(Continued from Page 4)



"Leaving Harbor"  
LCIs depart from Dartmouth en route to Normandy.

"The Wounded Amphibian"  
Dartmouth, England, spring, 1944.  
LCI (L) 493 undergoes repairs after damage in practice landing.



# A D-Day Poem by Ensign Harry Shleifer, Communications Officer, LST Flotilla 10

Submitted by his son **Jon Shleifer** of Portland, Oregon

*Jon writes: Dad was an ensign serving as a communication officer on the LST Flotilla 10 Staff. After the Normandy and South France invasions he was promoted to Lieutenant, Junior Grade. All officers are listed on LST 282 log in the computer as disembarking from the 282 to LCI 219 June 6 at 17:56. He was aboard LCI 219 from D day to D+5. On D+5, LCI 219 was bombed and sunk. On LCIs serving as LST Flotilla flagships, the troop compartments were converted to radio communications centers for Flotilla command operations.*

## Magnificent Were Our Forces Expendable

One day I walked along the coast of France  
The sky was lovely but I had to pass a glance  
Upon the brave men now sleeping forever upon those sands  
Some quite whole and others without limbs or hands

I strolled for about a mile on that water's edge  
So startling and vast was that awful sight of carnage  
Amazed did I become at that destruction of this war  
And of the loss of lives on this God-forsaken shore

Yet expendable was everything on this initial drive  
For a toe hold on France, they did relentlessly strive  
Debris of mechanisms and men who would be no more  
Multiplied into thousands, enough to fight a small war.

My glance out to sea registered more arms which lay  
At the bottom of the sea, there to remain for many a day  
Swamped by overloading or blasted by shells or a mine  
Destroying our ships and crews, oh those dammed swine!

Those that had gained the beach and sitting high and dry  
Were now wrecks of tanks and trucks twisted awry  
LCT's and small craft somehow completely overturned  
As if some mighty hand had their mission spurned.

Cluttering the water were empty life rafts and soldier packs  
And mysterious oranges and our famous k ration snacks  
The beach was so snarled with matting and twisted wire  
Perhaps enough to span from there to Devonshire.

All this was expendable, our nations could afford it  
Our enormous reinforcements would soon the enemy smite  
Ever and ever more did we this beachhead quickly supply  
That the wreckage on that shore seemed a mere star in the sky

Magnificent to view and as far as the eye could see  
Was massed our mighty armada the greatest you'd agree  
Such a sight thrilled me, but how our prisoners did quake  
Even the German leaders felt sadly about their gigantic mistake.



# Your Officers and Board of Directors

Please feel free to contact any of the officers or directors listed below for whatever comments or questions you may have. If the person you contact does not know the answer to your question, he will direct you to one who can. We're here to serve you!

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