



“The Elsie Item”

**Official Newsletter of the
USS LANDING CRAFT, INFANTRY, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**

June, 2002

Newsletter #41

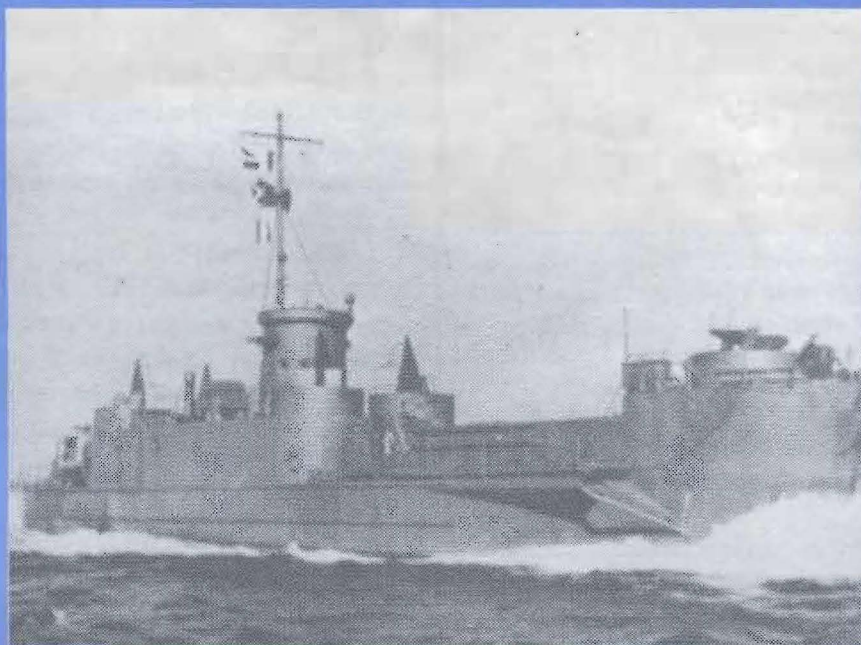
In Memory of Our Shipmates Lost in World War II
and

Those Who Served With Them aboard

L.C.I.

Landing Craft Infantry

All 920 ships that took part in every major engagement



Presented in grateful appreciation
by the U.S.S.L.C.I. National Association
11/11/95

**LCIers are Remembered at the Nimitz Museum,
Fredericksburg, TX**
(See story of San Antonio Reunion, Pg. 13)

"THE ELSIE ITEM"

Number 41

June, 2002

Official Newsletter of the USS LCI National Association, a non-profit veterans 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. Associate Membership, without voting privileges, may be offered to others upon approval of the Board of Directors. See Page 27 for a list of all officers and directors.

Published quarterly by the USS LCI National Association, 20 W. Lucerne Circle, #615, Orlando, FL 32801. John P. Cummer, Editor.

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From The Desk of Jim Talbert:

Well, we just got back from another Great Reunion and it was super seeing you all again. Of course we didn't have the usual large turnout that we usually have and I'm sure there was a good reason for it. And I am also sure you all know why you couldn't make it. The trip to Fredericksburg to the Nimitz Museum and President Johnson's Ranch was a step back in history. Very interesting. We also had one of the best speakers at the Banquet, we have ever had. He was Brig. Gen. Robinson Risner, US Air Force Retired. General Risner was in three wars, WWII, Korea and Viet Nam. He was a Prisoner of War in Viet Nam for over 7 years. Editor Cummer will have more in this issue about him. So look for it.



I'm really sorry, I must report the resignation of our California National Director, Jim McCarthy. Jim has been with us almost from the beginning and has done a fantastic job for the Association. I wish him all the best and will miss his input and wisdom.

Our new West Coast National Director will be Rod Scurlock of Boise, Idaho. Rod has a lot of experience, as he has been one of the real work horses in the Northwest Group. I'm sure Rod will be a great asset to the National Association.

I did find out, while in San Antonio, some of the things that are being reported did not get to the right people. All deceased notices, changes of address and e-mail addresses must be sent to Tiny Clarkson or to me and NOT to newsletter editor John Cummer. He has enough to worry about. Just send him the news articles and pictures you want in the "Elsie Item."

John and I plan to attend the Northwest Reunion in September and I'm really looking forward to seeing the progress Walt James and his helpers have made on the 713.

The membership at the San Antonio Reunion voted to have our 2004 Reunion in Portland, Oregon, the home of the 713. That should be a real drawing card for the membership. Good Lord willing, I know I will be there.

Well, let's get this thing to John and in the "Elsie Item"

Jim Talbert

WELCOME ABOARD!

A hearty "Welcome Aboard" to these Shipmates who have found their way to the Association since the last newsletter. A special welcome to those members from Flotilla 6 who have decided to cease having their own reunions and, at the urging of Connie Mulherin, LCI(G) 561 of Titusville, FL, have transferred their membership to the USS LCI National Association.

For ease in locating shipmates, we've arranged these under each category by ship number

From FLOT 6

<u>LCI</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank/Rate</u>	<u>Home Town</u>
422	Finch, David F.	QM3C	Jackson, MS
558	Sillasen, Thomas	SK3C	Hilton Head Island, SC
561	Hoffman, Joseph A.	MoMM1c	Omaha, NE
752	Guinand, Louis J.	GM3C	Bolingbrook, IL
Flot 6	Mihalik, Andrew	GM3C	Little Egg Harbor, NJ

Other New Members:

061	Berlin, George	RDM2C	Bonner Springs, KS
234	Leonard, Francis, "Ozzie"		West Hartford, CN
351	Jones, Robert B.	LTJG	Davidson, NC
354	Fleming, Richard N.		St. Marys, PA
363	Chandler, Harry E.		Cape Coral, FL
422	Williams, Lloyd H.	MoMM2C	Berkeley Springs, WVA
457	Churchill, Richard O.		Ravenna, OH
480	Carroll, Daniel A.	MoMM3C	Baltimore, MD
516	Porter, Clifford G.		Pittsburgh, PA
519	Sava, Louis	F1C	East Hartford, CN
527	Cancilla, Ross C.	SC1C	Oceanside, NY
544	Saba, Delor J.	S1C	Minneapolis, MN
544	Simoni, Valentino J.		Franklin Square, NY
558	Hoover, Herbert W.	LTJG	Kingsport, TN
568-1055	Brining, William H.	SC3C	Downey, CA
579	Busher, John S.		Hampstead, NC
590-573	LaJoice, Harry G.		Marquette, MI
744	Klug, Robert L.	QM3C	South Bend, IN
780	Bell, Nelson D.		Toledo, OH
1090	DeCuir, Tommy		Huntington Beach, CA

New Life Members

363	Chandler, Harry E.		Cape Coral, FL
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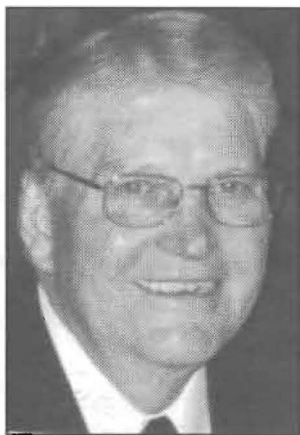
Affiliates:

<u>LCI</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Home Town</u>
429-073	Carroll, Mike	Son of Donald A. Carroll (deceased)	Northbrook, IL
441	Bell, Jane Edgar	Widow of Forrest Bell	Waskom, TX
561	Bailey, Chris B.	Grandson of Doyle F. Bailey (deceased)	Tuscaloosa, AL
661	Greene, Melvin R. "Chip"	Son of Ray Greene (deceased)	Eagen, MN
702	Hummel, Betty F.	Widow of John N. Hummel	Dunellin, NJ
713	Gilbo, Leon	"Chief of the Boat" LCI 713!	Portland, OR
965	Vanorny, Helen Kenzy	Daughter of Carl Kenzy	Edgerton, MN

Who We Were . . . Who We Are

Some Memorial Day Thoughts from the Editor

As the Allied invasion forces fought their way ashore at Normandy June 6, 1944, the British Broadcasting Corporation, with that great aplomb and sense of history for which the English are deservedly famous, went on the air with a speech from Shakespeare's *Henry V* which could not have been more appropriate. Months, years of training and preparation were over; the forces were launched. First waves of troops were struggling ashore. The battle was on and the English language was again mobilized and sent to war.



The speech that went out over the airwaves was that of young King Harry, rallying his forces for a desperate fight in the very same area where we were headed. He speaks the stirring 'St. Crispian's Day' speech:

*This day is called the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,
And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian",
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
And say, "these wounds I had on Crispin's Day."
Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day . . ."*

We "outlived that day and came safe home".

And yearly we may not "feast our neighbors", but we do, with old shipmates who were there too, remember and recall. For a time we again become the teenagers we were, totally convinced of our invincibility, leaving family and the familiar for the jolt, the challenges - and the comradeship - of military life because there was evil in the world that needed to be dealt with.

Caught up in the great necessity of the times, there was a sense of aliveness and purpose that very few things before or since have ever equaled. It was good to have it there to carry us through the drudgery, the boredom punctuated by adrenaline-pumping fright and those just downright bad

times. Life was learned much more quickly by our generation as we went through those years.

But reality breaks in. We're all old men now. That's what the calendar says. And TV commentators tell us over and over that we're dying off at the rate of 1,800 per day. They speak of us being in our "twilight years". Most people are kind - or at least tolerant - when they see us in our caps with the miniature medals that we love to wear as reminders of the full uniforms we once wore. But, in spite of our canes and walkers and shared-stories of health problems galore, most of the old shipmates I meet are far from ready to be treated as sweet old guys who have nothing left to contribute. I see lots of zest for life and spunkiness. Many of us are pretty good at making waves, fussing about something or just acting contrary and deservedly earn the title, "Old Geezer". I think many of us act that way as a way of telling people not to take us for granted or act as though we no longer really had anything worthwhile to do.

I hope I'm an old Geezer! My Christian Faith tells me I've got every reason in the world to act even now in my - well, let's say "advanced" years - as though there were still important work to be done and I still have a great life to be lived to the full.

Two bits of poetry say it well, The first are the opening lines of Robert Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra*

*"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be!
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid'"*

And the second is from Tennyson's *Ulysses*, Here, the old sailor, refusing to just sit and gaze into the sunset, urges his old shipmates:

*"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows: for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die. . .*

*. . . We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved heaven and earth; that which we are, we are:
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield"*

Shipmates, we did well in our youth . . . let's do equally well as we tackle all that's ahead for us, and let's do it with zest, optimism and courage!

John Cummer

SAN ANTONIO BUSINESS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Following are the highlights of the most important matters discussed and decided upon by the membership at the annual business meeting, Saturday, April 20, 2002, at San Antonio. Any member desiring a full copy of the minutes may request one from the Elsie Item Editor.

Portland, Oregon, selected as 2004 Reunion Site; LCI 713 to be there!

By an overwhelming vote, members voted to select Portland, Oregon, as the site for the 2004 reunion.

Armed Forces Reunion Services Donna Lee, following instructions from the Board of Directors to come up with three nominations for the site of the 2004 reunion which, by the adopted plan of rotating sites throughout the country is scheduled to be on the west coast in that year, brought in information on hotels in Seattle, WA, Costa Mesa, CA and Portland, OR.

The announcement that owner Walt James plans to bring the LCI 713 to Portland where it will be tied up directly outside the reunion hotel was obviously the deciding factor in the minds of the members.

Dates set for the 2004 reunion are May 19-23, 2004, and the hotel selected is the Double Tree Hotel, Jantzen Beach, which is located directly on the waterfront, making it possible for the 713 to tie up where she will be in the center of reunion activity.

LCIers from Portland report that much progress in restoring the 713 is being made by the diligent efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Rates at the Double Tree Hotel, Jantzen Beach, will be \$90 per day with free parking and airport shuttle.

Board Proposes Change in Dues Structure

A proposal was presented by the Board of Directors to address a problem caused by the fact that the amount of annual dues is stipulated in the by-laws, allowing for no change without changing the by-laws themselves.

Citing increasing financial pressures on the organization from costs of reunions and the newsletter plus our inevitable decline in membership, the Board is suggesting that a change be made at the next annual meeting to a policy which would allow the Board to decide on dues

each year.

In doing so, the Board is following the requirements for changing by-laws which stipulate that any proposed change must be presented by the Board at one annual meeting, but not voted upon by the membership until the next annual meeting. Thus, this proposal will be before the membership at our 2003 meeting in Washington, D.C.

Treasurer Tiny Clarkson noted that no drastic change in the present \$10.00 annual dues is necessary but a raise to about \$15.00 would be of great help in maintaining the activities and services of the organization.

National D-Day Museum, New Orleans, Recommended to Receive Final Distribution of Association Assets

Not long after its founding, the LCI National Association recognized that, because we are World War II veterans and the clock is ticking, the time would inevitably come when our numbers would drop to the point where it would be impractical to continue and that provision would have to be made for distribution of remaining assets. It was accordingly decided by an adoption of a by-law addition in 1998 to designate the U. S. Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C. as the recipient. Subsequently, our Association donated \$25,000 to the support of the Navy Memorial.

However, the quality of the New Orleans National D-Day Museum itself as well as the celebrations in 2000 surrounding its opening, and the 2001 opening of the Pacific Wing of the same museum, made an indelible impression on the large number of LCIers who were in attendance there. Many felt that in a much more specific way than the more generally-oriented Navy Memorial, the D-Day Museum, was the best representation of the participation of LCIs and other amphibious vessels in winning World War II and would do more to perpetuate the memory of our role. It was, therefore, decided by the Board of Directors, to propose changing the bylaws to designate the National D-Day Museum as the recipient of funds remaining after we pay our final bills and disband.

This proposal, along with the proposal for change in dues structure, will be presented to the membership for their vote at the 2003 Washington, D.C. reunion.

Officers and Board Members invite questions and comments on both of these proposals.

Officers Re-Elected

Members were evidently satisfied with how things are going under Jim Talbert's leadership for both he and Vice President John Cumber were renominated by Chick Mason, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, and reelected by acclamation. Jim expressed his thanks and his commitment to continue serving the organization to the best of his ability.

Treasurer "Tiny" Clarkson and Secretary Bob McLain were both reappointed by President Talbert.

Jim McCarthy Resigns as National Director

Jim McCarthy announced his resignation as a National Director but indicated his intention to continue serving as California State Director.

"I'm accepting this resignation most reluctantly," said President Talbert. "Jim has been a great leader in the organization and we will miss him very much, but I am very glad that he will be staying on as California State Director."

When the news of his resignation was announced the membership rose to its feet and gave him a standing ovation. Jim went to a microphone on the floor and thanked the members who had helped and supported him during his service as a Director.



REUNIONS! REUNIONS! REUNIONS!

LCI Northwest Reunion September 10-12 Vancouver, WA

LCIers across the nation are invited to join those living in the northwestern states for a reunion in Vancouver, Washington, which will feature the opportunity to visit LCI 713 currently undergoing restoration.

Rod Scurlock, Northwestern Regional Director for the USS L.C.I. National Association has announced that the reunion will be held at the Red Lion/Doubletree Inn, Vancouver, WA, September 10 - 12, 2002. Though rooms at the special rate of \$76 per day were officially available only until May 2, 2002, a call to the hotel at 1-800 REDLION will let you know what might still be available.

Further information and registration materials are available from Rod at :

Rod Scurlock, NW LCI Association
51405 Wanda Road E.
Eatonville, WA 98328
360/569-2841

Michigan Reunion September 10-11, 2002 Port Huron, MI

Michigan State Director Floyd Van Horn extends the invitation from Michigan LCIer to shipmates across the country to join them in their annual reunion which will be held at Port Huron, MI, September 10-11, 2001.

Chairman for this reunion will be Larry Hale, from whom further information is available. He may be reached at 810/984-4538.

Further information may also be had from Floyd (989/684-0151) or from National Director Sam Rizzo (313/886-5374)

**LCI 455,
17th ANNUAL REUNION
September 19-21, 2002
Ft. Dodge, IA**

Vaughn Hampton reports that with the 455 crew count down to 26 salts, he is extending the invitation for any other LCIs who can make it, to join them in Ft. Dodge, IA, September 19-21, 2002

For further information you may contact Vaughn by email (vehampton@attbi.com) or by phone at 303/424-6180.

**National Association of USS
LCS(L) 1-130
September 18 - 21, 2002
Virginia Beach, VA**

LCIs across the country are also invited to join our shipmates who served in the last "evolution" of the LCI - the Landing Craft Support (Large) ships which entered the Pacific Theater in 1945. (See the review of *The Mighty Midgets* in the March, 2002, issue of *Elsie Item*)

The LCS(L) Association will hold its 16th annual reunion at the Doubletree Hotel, Virginia Beach, VA, September 18-21, 2002. The Memorial Service, paying tribute to their members who have passed away since their last meeting, will be held on Friday, September 20, 2002.

Further information and registration materials are available from:

Keith Reid, Secretary
USS LCS(L) National Association
983 Northridge Drive
Bountiful, Utah 84010-1717
Phone: 801/295-0909
email: keithreid@juno.com

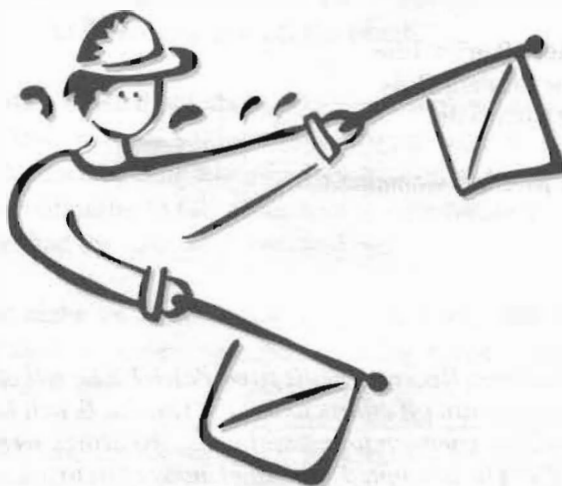
**Florida LCI Reunion
January 15-17, 2003
Sanford, FL**

Picking a date that will help attract as many "Snowbird" LCIs as possible, the Florida LCI reunion will be held in Sanford, FL, January 15-17, 2003.

Located about 30 miles north of Orlando, Sanford is a beautiful lakefront city. LCIs and their spouses will enjoy a bus trip to nearby Mt. Dora, another beautiful little town teeming with antique shops, boutiques, gift shops and lots of scenery where they will enjoy a luncheon at the historic Lakeside Inn, built in 1883. They will also enjoy a sumptuous buffet banquet and a four-hour gourmet luncheon excursion up the St. Johns River on the *Rivership Romance* which docks next to the Marina Hotel where LCIs will be staying.

Further information and registration materials are available from:

John Cummer
20 W. Lucerne Circle, #615
Orlando, FL 32801
407/843-3675
cummjhn@aol.com



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Once again we're glad to share with our readers comments, corrections and observations sent in by shipmates. We invite your participation - always glad to hear more anecdotes - and we're also glad to get the corrections to stories we've published that help keep the record straight. "Keep those cards and letters comin'!"

April 1, 2002

Dear Mr. Cummer,

I am a 46 years old French man and I am the webmaster of the site D-Day Etat des Lieux, <http://6juin1944.com>.

I read in the last Elsie Item dated March, 2002, the letter of Don McGranahan where it speaks about his friend who was on board the LCI 553 at Omaha Beach (page 10). There is on my site a part devoted to the testimony of veterans:

<http://www.6juin1944.com/veterans/indel.html>

Robert Leach was MOMM/3 on board the LCI 553 and he agreed to leave his testimony to the site. Can be that will interest Don McGranahan and his friend John Hooper?

In the same time, I always seek testimonies of veterans of June 6, 1944, in order to preserve what you all did this famous day. Can be you even (who were in Gold Beach) or other comrades, will agree to write over this particular day of your life.

If this e-mail can be published in forthcoming Elsie Item, I encourage all those present in Normandy to contact myself in order to be able to publish their experiences.

Monsieur Patrick Elie
32, Rue du Petit Bois
14840 Cuverville
France
email: patelie@wanadoo.fr

Regards,

Patrick Elie

Editor's Note: Recent e-mails from Patrick Elie tell of his attempts to ward off efforts to use the Omaha Beach landing areas as commercial mussel beds. Hearings were to be held and he attempted to contact many of us to ask us to join in the protests. Unfortunately, the hearing had already been held by the time we received the e-mail warning of this. We will keep you informed in future issues of what has developed in this project which most of us see as a smarting insult on the memory of the young men who gave their lives there for the liberation of France.

March 31, 2002

John:

Re: photo of individual looking at the model aboard USS Missouri ((March 2002 issue, page 29)

The individual named as looking at the model is not Gordon Carlson. He was Walt Larsen who was the Electrician's Mate on the 455. Walt is also a veteran of the Pearl Harbor attack. He was on one of the battleships that were sunk.

Don Wolf, LCI 455
Bangor, PA

March 27, 2002

Dear Mr. Cummer,

It was great to have you and your fellow members of the USS LCI National Association visit the Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War the other week. I'm sorry that your very fine model had been checked out by one of our volunteers for use in a school program. I wanted to let you know the model has been returned and has just been put out on exhibit in a 'Navy Ship Model' display set up in the ballroom of the old Nimitz Hotel, along with about 10 other model ships. I'm sorry that the exhibit went up after your visit, but it will be up throughout the summer and tens of thousands of people will be happy for the opportunity to see the wonderful LCI you donated to the museum. We can't tell you how delighted we are with your generous gift and how helpful it is in telling the story of our amphibious operations in the Pacific.

I hope you will be able to visit us again soon.

Best Regards,

Jeffrey Wm. Hunt,
Curator
Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War
Fredericksburg, TX.

Thanks, Jeffrey. We're happy to share your response with our readers. We were disappointed to miss seeing the model during our visit while in San Antonio for our 2002 reunion but were happy to learn that it is being put to use in school programs.

April 28, 2002

Dear Editor:

For the record, per page 20, March Newsletter, #40

Please be advised that after hitting the Normandy Beach on the morning of D-Day, June 6, 1944, the LCI 513 hit a mine which destroyed one of our twin screws plus making a hole aft. We limped across the channel to the British Navy Base at Southampton but they told us to head down the coast where we finally landed in a makeshift dry dock in the forest along the River Dart, inland of Dartmouth. After several weeks we were repaired and made seaworthy.

From there we proceeded back down to the Mediterranean in the Naples, Italy, area from where we landed troops on "D" Day of the Southern France invasion.

Just thought we would keep the records straight in honor of those who served on the 513 for those invasions.

Sincerely,

Vern Spitaleri
LCDR, USNR

Here's a letter from one of the LCI skippers who went through those terrible Pacific typhoons which were the subject of two articles in our last issues. Then LTJG Joe Black, now living in Oklahoma City, OK, sent us this letter describing his experiences:

April 24, 2002

The USS LCI (L) 599 was afloat in the very midst of the two typhoons that took place south of Japan and the Philippines. The 599 had yet to be in active combat.

We maneuvered the ship around in the wind and spray until our stern was in the wind. This way the wind and current were pushing us forward.

It seemed like days that we rode it out with the wind a solid sheet of salt water and nothing to protect me and the signalman, Mazonni. I put my hand over my face and the other hand criss crossed over it - that way I could get a glimpse of the elements every few seconds. I had the engine cut down to steerage way which would make us move forward.

[The size and displacement of the LCI] resulted in our being like a fishing cork riding the waves.

Some crew members and some officers were relieved of duty when they claimed they couldn't take it. Our food intake was for the most part sea rations which we ate directly in the conn.

We had all kinds of messages on the radio: distress calls, "what is our location?", "we are taking on water", "we have but a few gallons of fresh water to drink", etc. The LCI had enough fuel to travel to Australia but only 750 gallons of fresh water. This confirmed the theory that the LCI had been built for one trip by women welders because so many of the seams parted.

At last the skies cleared and the water calmed down and with nothing in sight our Quartermaster estimated our position and we increased the engine speed to one-half. We sailed in a wide circle to see if we could see anything of the stragglers. No such luck and almost unbelievable.

I have not tried to separate the two typhoons in this account - frankly, I doubt that I could. The experience made me appreciate the LCI as a seaworthy tub - some ship! There is hardly anymore one can write or explain how it felt to be in that typhoon. I didn't know that I was scared until it was all over.

LTJG Joe W. Black, C.O
2917 Chapel Hill Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73120

Thanks, Joe, for sharing this account with us. No one who went through it will ever forget those typhoons.

"Milvet99"

News and Commentary for LCIers

If you're using e-mail and your address has been carried in Elsie Item, chances are you already know about "Milvet99" the e-mail news and commentary service which is the brainchild of ex-Quartermaster Fred Langston of LCI 605 and a resident of Wenatchee, Washington.

He calls it the "LCI Net" and sends it regularly to members of the LCI National Association whose e-mail addresses he has picked up from the lists published here.

"I was putting out a small newsy thing for a veteran's organization here locally", explained Fred, "then I started putting it out to a small number of LCIers I knew.

"Then one day I decided I had more empathy and kinship for LCIs than I had for the local vet group so I went to a copy of the Elsie Item, got some e-mail addresses and it was off and running."

Fred keeps the news light and informative, often taking submissions from LCIs to pass on to his audience. It's been used to announce and encourage attendance at national, state and regional LCI reunions. LCIs often use it to look for shipmates or to pass on "sea stories".

"I've tweaked it a bit from time to time, but the present format seems to be pretty well accepted at this time," commented Fred. "Nowadays I pretty much stay away from the political and controversial.. I hope the letter continues to be as well received as it is now and will provide some service to our shipmates.

Fred has his own store of sea stories to share. He describes the "biggest bang" as the explosion of the ammunition ship Mt. Hood in Leyte Gulf. He also recalls seeing the USS Franklin after barely surviving an incredible assault from kamikazes.

"...she looked like a piece of Swiss cheese. We did a 360 around her and at no time could we not see daylight through her from any angle."

Fred also rode out the infamous typhoons on the 605 and was aboard when she was the first ship into Kagoshima, Japan for the occupation.

"The whole town was completely empty . . . really weird . . . their leaders had told them we were going to kill them all so they were hiding out of town:"

After returning stateside on the 605, Langston shipped out for a short time on LCI 984, did some duty in a Destroyer Escort, the USS DeLong, before returning to civilian life.

Fred puts in lots of time and effort to make "Milvet99" a good way to keep current on what's happening in LCI circles and to pick up interesting - and many times very funny - commentary on the world.

Try it - you may just like it.



An Amorous Pole with Designs on an LCI! or

"Yes, the Upper Echelons of Command Do Have a Sense of Humor!"

We are indebted to Dr. Robert O. Johns, LCDR USN (Ret) of Reno, Nevada, for this delightful account of the problems one LCI had with a much bigger ship. Dr. Johns was Communications Officer on LCI 618, the Flotilla 22 Flagship, where he served with "an extraordinary radioman", as he describes him, named Jim Talbert!

Dr. Johns found the report of the collision of the SS Richard Moscozowski and LCI 330, along with endorsements up the change of command to Commander, South Pacific Force and has kept the documents all these years. We are delighted to pass it on to you to prove that occasionally, high ranking officers do have a sense of humor.

The tale begins with the official report of the collision of LCI 330 with the SS Richard Moscozowski in full officialese:

20 March 1944

From: Commanding Officer, USS LCI 330
To: Commanding Officer, LCI Flotilla Five
Subj: Collision with the S.S. Richard Moscozowski; Report of

1. While anchored in 15 fathoms of water off Koli Point with beacon A bearing 180 degrees true from us on the morning of 18 March 1944, the S. S. RICHARD MOSCOWSKI, while maneuvering to anchor, stuck the after port of our fantail, knocking off one of our stantions and puncturing a hole about one foot in diameter in its starboard amidships. We were struck at 1012 and at 1015 our anchor had been weighed and we were underway.

2. We then went about one-half mile to westward of this anchorage and anchored again at 1026. The S. S. RICHARD MOSCOWSKI, however, followed us and soon was again in a threatening position to our windward so that at 1040 we commenced heaving around on the stern anchor and at 1042 we were underway. Had we stayed at this second anchorage, we would almost undoubtedly have been struck again. At 1054 we again anchored, this time about one-half mile to the eastward of our original anchorage.

3. Soon after we were struck, the Koli signal tower sent the following by visual to us: Report to CTF 31 by visual damage suffered by you in your recent collision and a recommendation on your part AAA CTF Operation. To this we answered: *No damage to us X We were anchored in*

usual spot off Koli while maneuvering to anchor RICHARD MOSCZOWSKI drifted into us, corner of our fantail making small hole in his hull amidships X No recommendations.

/s/ Donald S. Vorhees

But this official report was not enough for the intrepid Captain of LCI(L) 330, so in a fit of daring worthy of a junior Reserve officer, he decided to append to his official report a much more amusing unofficial report:

After all the official openings:

1. While anchored in our usual spot off beacon A at Koli on the morning of 18 March 1944, we were once threatened and once struck by a floating menace to navigation now operating in this area, the S. S. RICHARD MOSCZOWSKI. I was sitting in my cabin busily throwing away directives on 5" 38 ammunition and 40mm hydraulic mounts when a signalman brought in to me the following message: "Are you in your right berth?" Having no assigned berth, I walked leisurely out on deck preparatory to moving, if necessary, only to be confronted by a great wall of rusty steel that rose out of the water some fifty yards astern of us. High as the Eiffel Tower and long as the Great Wall of China, it was sliding down on us very nicely with hard left rudder. As our only claim to the berth was that we had practically homesteaded it, we started heaving round on the anchor. Seeing our evasive tactics, the rusty Pole quickly got more left rudder and we all started trying on our life jackets for size while singing "Nearer My God to Thee." Adding insult to injury the RICHARD MOSCZOWSKI's rails were lined with a pack of laughing seamen who pointed at us and jeered. "What were you when you were still afloat?" Thereupon we manned the rails, shook our fists at them and thundered, "God damn ye, take that hunk of junk away!" But our voices would not carry that high and on she came, bigger and uglier by the moment. Then - - -WHAM - - - after the tumult had died down and the little old 330 stopped shaking and shuddering, we surveyed the damage: one stantion gone on the after port corner of the fantail where we had been hit. But gaping at us from the sides of the mighty R.M., was a great hole in her skin. By this time our anchor was up and off we shot at flank speed like a scared rabbit.

2. Warily keeping our distance, we thereupon went one mile westward, dropped anchor and again hoisted our anchor ball. It was no great surprise to observe the R.M. slowly and ponderously turning as soon as our anchor ball was hoisted and come lumbering along after us. (With her anchor dragging on the surface of the water like, as our Executive Officer said, a man with his fly open) just enough to windward to insure that she'd again be set down upon us. Again we wound up the engines, again we hoisted anchor (this time so fast that we almost wrapped it around the cable drum) and again we shot off at flank speed like a startled rabbit - but this time we eluded her. When we looked back, there was the old R. M. futilely skidding over

the very spot where our screws had first kicked up a swirl.

3. We thereupon did 650 RPM to a point about midway between Guadalcanal and Florida until we were sure our antagonist had for certain dropped the hook. When her conn appeared deserted, we sneaked back to an anchorage at a safe distance (one and a half miles) to eastward. Before we anchored we debated whether to signal:

- A. Do you mind if we anchor here?
- B. Why don't you pick on someone your own size?
- C. Stuff that hole with your fat head!
- D. Try that APC over there -she's wooden!

Being unable to decide the most appropriate message, we held our tongue and said nothing.

4. The Hydrographic Office is being notified that when last observed by us, the R. M. again had her anchor dragging on the surface and was in hot pursuit of another liberty ship.

5. Permission is requested to paint one Liberty Ship on our Conn.

/s/ DONALD S. VORHEES

And, with an unexpected sense of humor, Commander LCI(L) Flotilla Five sent BOTH messages up to Commander THIRD Fleet with the following endorsement:

1. Two reports of subject incident are forwarded for information. "A" is the report officially submitted. "B" is the rough first draft which was found in the waste basket. As the contents of waste baskets are often more interesting than the content of files, both copies are submitted.

-and, Commander Landing Craft Flotillas, THIRD Amphibious Force, decided to get into the act by adding his own endorsement:

1. Forwarded, concurring that report "B" has considerable entertainment value.

... not to be outdone, Commander THIRD Amphibious Force sent it on up to Commander, SOUTH PACIFIC, with his own twist:

1. Forwarded for information; inviting attention to enclosure B.

2. It is recommended that the Maritime Commission devise some method of degaussing to curb the amorous habits of the RICHARD (and his kind), in pursuit of the dainty LCI.

(Continues, next page)

(Continued, from previous page)

It would undoubtedly have been great fun to be there when Robert B. Carney, Chief of Staff to Commander South Pacific, read this message and its endorsements. He had the final say on the matter as he sent the missive back down the line:

1. Returned.
2. The Commander South Pacific notes with grave concern the complacent and unaggressive attitude of the Commanding Officer LCI(L) 330 in the face of the obvious belligerent tactics of the RICHARD MOSCOWSKI.
3. It is to be hoped that responsible officers in the chain of command will successfully endeavor to inculcate in Vorhees that fundamental spirit of "Attack! Attack! Attack!" which has characterized the entire South Pacific campaign.
4. The Commander South Pacific intends to take no disciplinary action against the Commanding Officer LCI(L) 330 but hopes that in any future similar situation, the Commanding Officer will seize the initiative, or any other weapon ready at hand, and seek a favorable decision when contact is imminent.
5. The sexual aspects of this incident, as implied by CTF 31, are noted, but conclusive proof seems to be lacking.
6. The authority to paint a Liberty Ship on the bridge of LCI 330 is withheld pending further investigation.

/s/ ROBERT B. CARNEY
Chief of Staff

Yes, the upper echelons of command do sometimes have a sense of humor!

Navy Uniforms Available!

Beginning with our participation in the celebrations surrounding the opening of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans, many LCIs have adopted a "uniform" to be worn on such occasions, consisting of our blue ship's caps (available from Tiny), Navy uniform short-sleeved white shirts, white trousers and white shoes. The gold and scarlet amphibious patch is worn on the left shoulder and often the gold metal amphibious pins, also available from Tiny, can be worn on the points of the collar of the shirt.

Should you want to purchase these or any other Navy Uniform items you may do so through the Navy Exchange Uniform Shop. Your order may be placed at the toll free number 1-800-368-4088. Prices are the same as in Uniform Shops at Navy Exchanges and they will be delivered to your home.

Dad's First Day in Combat: A Son Remembers his LCI Father

Editor's Note: It's with pride that we reprint here an excerpt from the diary of Vaughn Leonard Snook, of LCI (G) 23 of Holt, Michigan, as provided to us by his son Vaughn R. Snook. In an accompanying letter, Vaughn, the son, said:

"First let me say thank you for your service in WWII. I appreciate what you did for me and our country. My son is in the Army.

"Secondly, it is with great regret that I tell you of the passing of my father, Vaughn Leonard Snook LT(JG), who served on the LCI (G) 23. My father died on September 6, 2001. In some ways I am glad he didn't see what happened on September 11th. My Dad was an "old geezer" on the 23 because he was 28 years old at the time and had two children and my Mom at home.

"Home is the sailor; home from the sea!"

Thanks, Vaughn, we will remember your dad.

From the Diary of Vaughn Leonard Snook, LT(JG) of LCI(G) 23 on his first day in combat, Leyte Gulf, Philippines, November 1944

The natives tell us terrible stories of the Jap regime. Natives leave when GQ is sounded at 1415. I have traded Margie's green towel for Jap money. I felt fear when those devils came at us. You could not possibly see it all, but I saw enough. Our P-38's had intercepted them and kept most of them out, but 12 or 15 Zero's got in to us. Our guns opened up on them. Three came roaring at us and on over. Two of them crash-dived into big transports. Suicide dives. One transport was not over 50 yards from us, so we had a ring-side seat at the game of death. The Zero must have been carrying a bomb, because there was a flash, a puff of smoke, and men and debris flew in all directions. Another Zero that crash dived at a transport overshot his mark and hit an LCI unloading men from the transport. He crashed into the fantail and his plane was nothing but floating debris in the water. The third plane that went over us dropped a bomb square in the middle of a transport and was immediately shot down and crashed into the water. Fifty some men were killed on the transport we learned later. One Jap plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire and a thin stream of smoke could be seen coming from his plane high in the sky. It burst into flames and he peeled off and crashed into an LST. They picked the large ships to crash into. Glad I'm on an LCI! Seven of those that got in were downed, but I only saw four go down. Two were suicide dives and six shot down. Dog fights were going on high in the air, but I did not see any more planes fall in this raid. Five

(Continues on page 17)

SAN ANTONIO IN APRIL - ANOTHER GREAT REUNION !



Typical of all the LCers at San Antonio, Crew members of LCI 455 and their wives enjoy once again renewing friendships and recalling wartime adventures - and misadventures! Left to right seated: Joe Turley, Lucy Ree Carpenter, Marvin Carpenter, Roy Davis and Vivian Davis. Standing, left to right: Gordon Carlson, Jane Eyre Carlson.

Almost 400 LCers and their spouses descended upon San Antonio, April 17-20, for the 2002 reunion of the USS LCI National Association. Though attendance was down from previous years, the great fellowship and enjoyable time together were there in abundance as always.

Shipmates renewed friendships, enjoyed the hospitality of a delightful city, and discovered again the strength of the bonds forged over half a century ago as proud members of the amphibious forces of the U. S. Navy.

Tours to Fredericksburg, home of the Admiral Nimitz museum, to the Alamo and other attractions in the area and a delightful evening of barbecue and entertainment at the Diamond W Ranch provided the background for the fellowship with old shipmates and new friends.

At the business meeting on Saturday morning, members heard reports from the officers and selected Portland, Oregon, as the site for our 2004 reunion.

Members were also presented with proposals from the Board of Directors for changes in the by-laws concerning dues and for disposal of Association assets upon disbanding.

According to the by-laws these proposals must be presented at one annual meeting and voted on by the membership at the next. Details on these proposals are presented elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

The memorial service at the cemetery at Fort Sam Houston on Saturday morning was a quiet, solemn and moving experience as 173 shipmates who departed this life during the past year were honored with color guards, eulogies and the tolling of the ship's bell.

In a fitting conclusion to a great reunion, General Robinson Risner, USAF, RET, held the banquet crowd spellbound with his personal story of his seven and one half years as a prisoner of war in Viet Nam. Pride in America and in men such as General Risner swept through the banquet room as he concluded with an account of defiant prisoners of war singing the Star Spangled Banner despite threats of brutal beatings from the guards.

Indeed, another great reunion! And on the following pages, we share some pictures to prove it!

Our LCI Plaque at the Nimitz

Left: LCI National Association officers Tiny Clarkson, Jim Talbert and John Cummer visit the LCI Memorial Plaque at the Nimitz Museum, Fredericksburg, Texas.

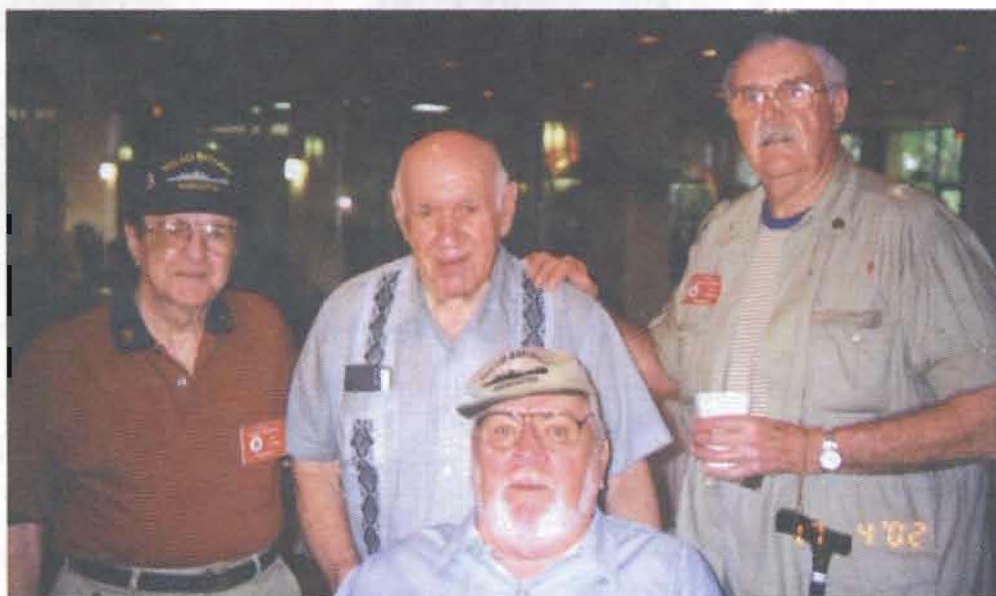


"Cookie" Tries Again!

Harold Ronson, Ship's Cook on LCI 1012, tries out his old seat on the 40mm at the Nimitz Museum - and recalls an old mishap when the gun fired automatically, inducing a serious case of "Captain's Wrath" (Get him to tell you the story!)

A remarkable man!

Thinking he was an LCler they hadn't met yet, Jim Talbert, Tiny Clarkson and Jim McCarthy introduced themselves to Irving Reifer of Houston, Texas, and found out that he was not an LCler but a true survivor who had spent five years as a German Prisoner of War during WWII. Forced to work at hard labor, Irving was moved from camp to camp before finally being liberated on April 26, 1945. Forty two of his family members were lost to the Nazi Holocaust. A native of Krakow, Poland, Irving emigrated to the United States in 1950 and has pursued a career in graphic arts. We all felt honored to meet him.



“Chick” Mason Rides Again!

Always looking to get in on the action, “Chick” Mason, LCI 407, found himself starring in a stirring drama of the old West at the Diamond W Ranch barbecue. Having been found guilty by a gun-toting judge, Chick barely escaped the hangman’s noose when the other players confused him with a jackass!



A real American hero!

President Jim Talbert welcomes retired Brigadier General Robinson Risner, USAF, to the banquet.

After being shot down once and rescued, General Risner was shot down again in September, 1965, over North Viet Nam and captured. He served as the senior ranking officer and later as vice commander of the 4th Allied Prisoner-of-War Wing.

General Risner won the respect and admiration of all LCIers as he challenged and thrilled us with the account of his service to his country.



The U. S. Air Force Color Guard posts the colors at the Memorial Service



Chaplains Cox and Henshaw read the names of each of the 173 shipmates who departed during the past year.



...and the Ship's bell tolls for each departed

MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW TO ATTEND THE 2003 USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION REUNION AT THE DOUBLE TREE HOTEL, CRYSTAL CITY (WASHINGTON, D.C.), MAY 28 - JUNE 1, 2003!

ships were burning in the harbor, but no ships sank. The fires were soon under control. I guess that raid was a success for the Japs. They sure play rough and for keeps!

1500. Four or five Jap planes try to slip in to the transports. Two get in and drop bombs, but they miss. One boils the water too close to us for comfort. One is hit by anti-aircraft fire and tries to crash dive, but his plane bursts into flames and he falls into the water. Good thing he was hard hit. Dog fights are going on high over Leyte. We learn that two more Zeros were downed, but I did not see it. Jap Zero's are driven off by our P-38s. They sure are fine to see and we cheer them as if we were at a ball game. We eat a cold supper because we had GQ all day. There were low clouds in the sky over the bay and the Japs would come out of those clouds and be in before we knew it.

1900. Jap planes came in to drop bombs on LSTs unloading on the beach. Anti-aircraft fire opens up and in the dusk the tracers look like a fourth of July fireworks display. One Jap plane is shot down and goes roaring into the bay. They are not dropping bombs on us, but we fear a stray one. In these air attacks I feel like I used to feel before the kick-off in an important football game. Darkness comes at last and it is cloudy, which makes a bombing raid improbable. I write to Margie and the boys today. The raids are over for today. I'll never forget my first day in the Philippines. I must say that the Japs gave us a warm welcome.

Book Review

We're glad to again welcome Ralph Langenheim, LCI 551, of Urbana, IL, for a book review.

Readers are invited to send in suggestions for books to review that you think might interest members of the LCI Association. Of special interest will be books that feature life aboard LCIs during WWII and the accomplishments of our ships.

Lightening Strikes

by George H. Sweet with
Donald H. Sweet

Reviewed by Ralph Langenheim

Though this is an account of an LST rather than an LCI, *Elsie Item* readers will be interested in this account of LST 358's career from commissioning to lend-lease to the

British because there are so many similar elements in our experiences and theirs.

The part of the book most interesting to LCI veterans is the anecdotal history of commissioning, convoy transit to the Mediterranean, the invasions of Sicily, Salerno, Anzio and the South of France. This part of the book is filled with stories that will be familiar. After all, we went through the same evolution from young civilians to practical mariners. Many of us were in the same actions and events and may enjoy hearing how it looked from an LST.

In addition to the anecdotal records, the authors give us a liberal dose of their opinions about history, morality and life in general. There is nothing particularly new here, and you may or may not appreciate their views. *The Atlantic Fleet, Amphibious Training Command, LST Data Book* is reprinted in the appendices - complete with a canceled "Confidential" designation. Finally, a file of letters to and from George H. Sweet and his fiancée is also included, giving the book a particularly personal slant.

The book is profusely illustrated with snapshots from the LST 358, from other LSTs and from Naval archives. These are of wildly diverse quality. Many are fascinating shots taken aboard LST 358. Many are the usual formal group shots. Contemporary and present portraits of the authors, however, are a good commentary on the present and past state of all of us.

George Sweet, who claims to have been the youngest LST Commanding Officer ever at age 22, served in that capacity for almost the entire life of his ship. He was one of those veterans who didn't want to talk about it, but was jarred loose by his younger brother, Donald Sweet, a PBY veteran from the Pacific Theater. Donald contributes italicized commentary throughout the text.

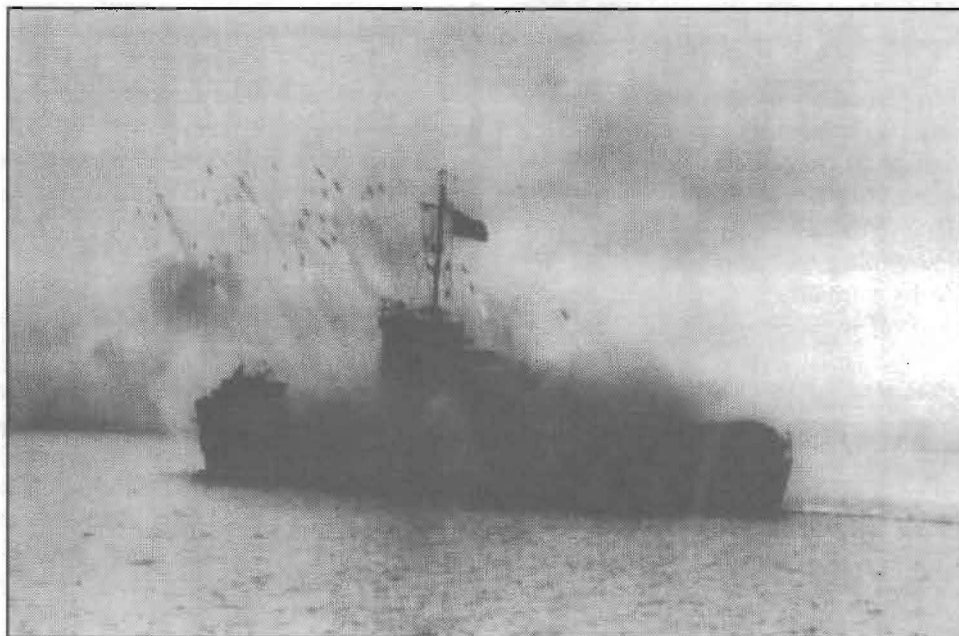
The book was privately printed in a good format, but would have benefitted from fact checking, spell checking and editing (General Rommel's name, for example, was Erwin not Eric and the sinking of the Lusitania was a prelude to the First World War, not the Second).

The sea stories about life on board will be just as accurate as most of our own tales and just as interesting.

[Publication Data: Sweet, George H and Donald H. Sweet, *Lightening Strikes*, 2000 DOGO Publishing, 135 Woodland Ave., Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3023. Price: \$27.50. Order from Mr. G. H. Sweet, Jr., PO Box 2237, Pinehurst, NC 28370.]

LCI 31- THE FIRST ROCKET SHIP??

By Harold MacCombie



One of the best known photos of rocket-firing LCIs - the LCI(G) 74 in Action

Editor's Note: Sure to spark some return mail, we offer here Harold MacCombie's thesis that the 31 was the first of the rocket-firing LCIs. Should make for some interesting reading for all you LCIs who served on those smokin' ships.

Harold served as MoMM1c on the 31 and is currently a resident of Framingham, MA.

I have read in the *Elsie Item* [#23, page 17, and also #25, page 23] that the first time LCIs used rockets was at Kwajalein Island on 31 January 1944. According to the article in issue #23, the LCI 366 was converted into a rocket ship between December 28, 1943, and January 10, 1944, and that on January 31, 1944, she arrived at Kwajalein Island and shot her rockets. I am sure they did a great job.

Now to set the record straight as to the first LCI rocket ship.

These are the facts as they happened:

Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, Head of the 7th Amphibious Force in the South West Pacific Area, came aboard the LCI 31 on 20 November 1943 to look us over as we had already had four successful landings with the Australian infantry. He decided that he would try out a new weapon that he had heard about, so he ordered the LCI 31 to be converted to a rocket gunboat. The week of 26 November 1943, the rocket launchers were welded to the deck and a

40mm gun was mounted on the bow with some .50 caliber machine guns also mounted at different places around the ship. This work was done in Milne Bay, New Guinea, by the *USS Reigel*, flagship of ADM Barbey and the repair ship for the 7th Amphibs.

After everything was checked out and tested Admiral Barbey came aboard and on 10 December 1943 we went out to a small island outside of Milne Bay and fired our rockets. Admiral Barbey then went ashore with his inspection team to view the results. When he saw the damage, he ordered the LCI 34 to be converted also.

I quote from *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, by Daniel E. Barbey, page 112:

"On the decks of the LCI 31 and LCI 34 we installed racks to hold 12 rockets; 12 launchers to each side of the deck for a total of 288 rockets"

And from page 119 of the same book:

"The effect of the rocket tryout on a small island near Milne Bay was devastating. The rain forest was cut as with a giant scythe. We hoped their use at Cape Gloucester a few weeks later would be equally devastating"

The landing on Cape Gloucester, New Britain Islands, took place on 26 December 1943.

Again, from *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*:

"There were few defenders on the beach at Cape Gloucester and those that were there never fired a shot. The LCI(R)s may be given much credit for that."

The pictures I am enclosing [*Editor: Unfortunately we were unable to reproduce them*] of rockets being fired at Cape Gloucester on 26 December 1943 and the newspaper clippings of Cape Gloucester should show that the LCI 31 was the first rocket ship.

Our second landing with rockets at Saidor, New Guinea, was also before the Kwajalein landing. On page 130 of ADM Barbey's book he describes the effect of the LCI rocket ships at Saidor.

I have to brag a little here - just the facts. The LCI(R) 31 made 20 assault landings against the Japanese. Seventeen of those were as a rocket ship, gunboat and fire fighting ship. In New Guinea, the Halmeheras, the Philippines and Borneo we shot so many rockets that we wore the first racks out, so the new style were installed in the Philippines. They shot a lot more rockets than the first launchers.

There has been some controversy over whether or not the LCI rocket ships were (G) or (R). At first, and for quite a while, we were designated as (R). Admiral Barbey in his book called us (R). Later on as bigger bow guns and upper deck guns were mounted, the (G) for gunboat was added. Looking at some of my old letters to my parents, I find that the (R) was used for almost a year.

The LCI 31 - (R) and (G) - was my home for 26 months.

Musings from Arvid Grover:

"Health nuts are going to feel stupid someday, lying in hospitals dying of nothing."

"I asked Mom if I was a gifted child . . she said they certainly wouldn't have paid for me!"

"According to a recent survey, men say the first thing they notice about a woman is their eyes. And women say the first thing they notice about men is they're a bunch of liars!"

"Whenever I feel blue, I start breathing again!"

"Doctors can be frustrating. You wait a month and a half for an appointment, and he says, 'I wish you'd come in sooner'".

LCI Calendars Still Available!

The 2002 LCI Calendars produced by California State Director Jim McCarthy are still available. Though half of the year is gone, the great photos are well worth the price. Buy one for a collector's item!

The calendars sell for \$5.00 each including tax and shipping:

Use this order blank to place your order:

SEND ORDERS TO:

J. E. McCarthy,
349 Idlewild Lane,
Oceanside, CA 92054-5418

No. of Calendars: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

SHIP TO:

Name: _____

LCI#: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____



In Memoriam

We pause once again to pay tribute to the memory of these Shipmates who have left us since the last Newsletter.

"We Shall Remember Them"

<i>LCI</i>	<i>Shipmate</i>	<i>LCI</i>	<i>Shipmate</i>
12	Joe L. Swieczynski	396	Capt. John W. Peil
15	Edward Tully	396	Richard Ludwinski
18	Robert Maher	396	Harold Box
22	Pendleton G. Porter	404	Robert Heath
25	Donald J. Tufts	405	George Caldwell
29	James M. O'Malley	517	Austin H. Willi, Sr.
31	Laverne Hawidet	527	Dino Dallaguarda
31	Donald Bachman	533	H. Edward Randolph
62	J. C. Pietle	537	Billy J. Shelton
74	Robert Kirsch	561	James H. Reid
77	Dr. William Clark	577	Robert D. Steiner
85	Charles O. McWhirter	578	Henry R. Williams
88	James Pinero	632	William W. Shoemaker
328	William R. Jones	645	Donald Thomas Bishop
343	William Thomas	651	Anthony J. Cybulski
344	John Carey	786	James Mc Kenzie
345	Bill Williamson	808	Bruce C. Walter
355	William F. Day	867	J. R. Abney
366	Charles Miller	?	Joseph G. Connors
366	Elfred Hunt	?	Raymond Crafton

LCI'S AT NORMANDY: TWO FIRST HAND ACCOUNTS



*LCI 497 pays the price at Omaha Beach.
(Photo supplied by Steve Besse, LCI 420)*

As the anniversary of the D-Day landings, June 6, 1944, rolls round again, LCI veterans of those landings recall again the turmoil and stressful demands of that day and the days following. We pass on two of those accounts to you:

I. LCI 420 SURVIVES BARRAGE BALLOONS, AMMUNITION BARGES AND ARMY NURSES!

Steve Besse, Corvallis, Oregon, who served as Executive Officer aboard LCI 420 shares this account:

“As I recall there were 12 LCIs in our group. We had come across the Atlantic together, had survived a Luftwaffe bombing of the Saltash railroad bridge near Plymouth, England, and then had trained together for two months. The night of June 5th, 1944, we headed for Normandy. It was about 10:30 in the morning that we finally were able to land into Easy Red on Omaha Beach. German 88s were located just over the hill. They could not see our ship but they could see our big barrage balloon tied up on our fantail. They just zeroed in on the balloon.

On our first trip to the beach that morning, we managed to unload our troops. We were just backing off the beach when the Germans opened up with their 88s. The first shot hit off the port side and the next just to starboard. By this time we had managed to turn from the beach and kicked the ship into flank speed. The next 88 hit our balloon on the fantail sending it flying. We were sure happy to get

rid of that deadly monster. LCI 497 (see picture above) was on our port side on our first trip to the beach. They hit a mine and were sunk just off the beach.

“We then cruised out about 10 miles where we picked up load after load of soldiers taking them back to Omaha Beach. Each landing was a frightening experience as shells were continuing to fall all around us. Fortunately, we no longer had the balloon to attract firing.

“That night we were assigned duty as a tug. Two LCIs were tied up on opposite sides of a big barge which had about a thousand tons of ammunition aboard. Using each LCI as a single screw, we maneuvered the barge onto Omaha beach. There was a tremendous amount of fire power that night and tracers were flying everywhere. We just hoped that none would hit our barge. We didn't take time to unbend the lines to the barge - we just cut ourselves loose with an axe.

(Continued, next page)



Steve Bessoe's ship, the 420, ready for D-Day

(Continued)

"Later on we escorted a group of British LCTs back to England. It was very foggy and two of them got separated when we made a slight turn. They speeded up and on spotting the rest of the group thought they had run into German E-boats. They started firing at each other but we managed to turn off the battle quickly. We brought a group of nurses back to Omaha beach. Due to severe weather, we couldn't unload them for three days. That was the best time of the whole Invasion!

AN ACCOUNT OF THE JUNE 1944, GREAT STORM THAT NEARLY WRECKED THE INVASION

Roland Harris also sent us a reprint of a November, 1962 article from Stag Magazine entitled "800 Ships Missing . . . Task Force 128 still Hanging On . . ."

It is a graphic account of the storm that wrecked the artificial harbors which had been constructed at Omaha Beach and Arromanches in the British landing zone. LCI 414 figures prominently in the account as, for a time, it served as headquarters for Captain Augustus Clark, Commander of Mulberry A Task Force as he battled to save the harbors.

If you would like a reprint of the 8 page article, you may request one from the Editor for the cost of reprinting and mailing: (\$2.00)

DR. STEPHEN AMBROSE BATTLES CANCER

As we share these accounts of LCIs at Normandy, we take this opportunity to wish a beloved comrade well as he enters a most difficult struggle.

Dr. Stephen Ambrose, noted historian who more than anyone else has documented the bravery and courage of the men who stormed the beaches around the world during World War II, and whose vision and leadership resulted in the founding of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans, has just recently been diagnosed with lung cancer and is beginning a series of intensive chemotherapy treatments.

"Tiny" Clarkson spoke for all LCIers when, upon hearing the news he wrote:

"I truly believe that Ambrose has been the single most recognized voice in support of the front line infantryman and those of us who helped to put them

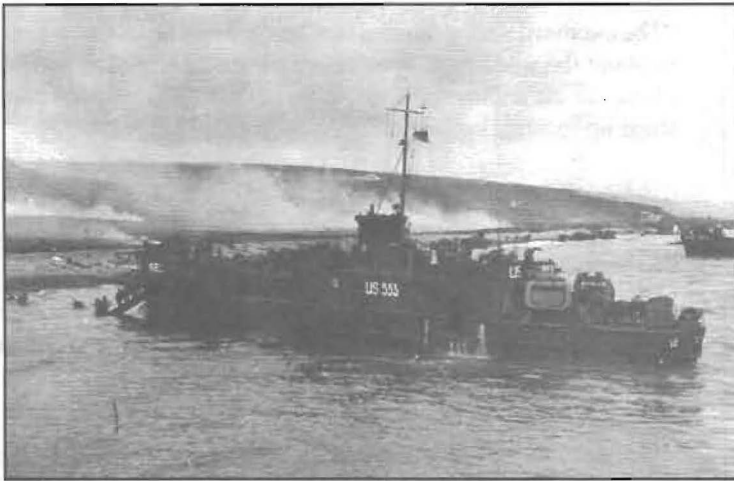
ashore from North Africa to Iwo Jima. His National D-Day Museum in New Orleans is a legacy beyond compare."

Of his coming battle, Dr. Ambrose has said:

"I have spent a good part of my career studying men and women who faced uncertainty about the future. Now I find myself facing a great challenge, and I am focusing on a course of action based on a balance of good sense and cautious optimism. I have a lot left to say and to write about our nation's history, the American spirit and personal leadership. I will take heart from the lessons I've learned over the years from these experiences as I deal with my own future".

God grant you the strength and courage of the heroes whose story you have told, dear friend and brother!

II. THE ACTION REPORT OF THE 553 - AND AN ATTEMPT AT PROPER IDENTIFICATION OF PHOTOS



Shown above are two of the best known and most often published photos of LCIs in action at Normandy. These two excellent prints were furnished to Elsie Item by Roland Harris of Sandusky, OH, who served on the LCI(L) 414. The photo to the left shows the 553 on the beach with the bow of another LCI to her starboard. The number of this LCI is difficult to make out but could, according to Roland Harris, be the 410. The photo to the right, evidently taken some time after the left photo, shows the 553 and two other LCIs which Roland identifies as the 410 and 408. This photo, taken from the conn of another LCI, which, according to information furnished by Don McGranahan, I believe to be his ship, the 412, shows two figures in the conn, one in a "talker" helmet and the other in an officer's cap.

A third photo, shown to the right (furnished by Don McGranahan) is another that has been widely published. It shows troops landing from Don's ship, the LCI 412. Don tells us that the LCI has often been misidentified and that he is anxious that everyone know that it is the 412. Don's sharp eye caught a misidentification of this photo in an article in the March 1999 issue of the newsletter of the 29th Infantry Division and he sent it along to us. The article accompanying the photo told of the meeting of its author, Billy Melander, of the 115th Reg. HQ Co, 29th Infantry Division and retired Navy Captain Donald G. DuBrul, who, at D-Day, was the skipper of the 553. The article quoted then LTJG DuBrul's action report and we are happy to share this with our readers this factual account of the loss of the 553:



ACTION REPORT OF THE USS LCI (L) 553, D-DAY, 6 JUNE 1944, By LTJG Donald G. DuBrul

This vessel as part of Assault Group 2 landed on Dog Red Beach at approximately 1040 about 25 yards to the right of USS LCI(L) 408. Due to the fact that our stern anchor did not hold, this vessel drifted in front of the 408 which had stopped but was not beached. The two hundred (200) troops were then unloaded without a casualty. By this time our stern had drifted squarely in front of the bow of the 408 and it was attempted to unload her troops aboard our stern and thus to the beach. This did not prove

successful as the distance from the 408's ramps to our stern was about 6 feet short. At about 1055, the 408 stood off the beach and made another landing further up the beach. In our attempt to back off we found that we were stuck on the beach.

During this time Dog Red Beach was subjected to heavy mortar fire from strong points still held by the Germans. Shrapnel was constantly falling on the deck, but as yet, no damage or casualties. During the period between 1055 and 1145 several attempts were made to kedge and back the ship off, but with no results. Also, during the above period, the beachmaster instructed us to have another LCI pull us off the beach. Three LCIs were asked to pull us off but they would not attempt it. At 1200 the USS

LCI(L) 555 passed us his anchor cable and attempted to pull us off but since the tide had started ebbing, the attempt was in vain, and we cast him off in order that he would not get hit by the bombardment which at this time was intensified. During this intensified bombardment all hands were ordered below to the mess hall for protection against shrapnel. By 1230 the ship was high and dry, generators and the engine room were secured. We then contacted the Assistant Beachmaster for instructions, which were to wait for the next tide (midnight on D-Day).

At about 1300 an 88mm opened up on the ship from a direction along the beach to the east. We took a hit in the crew's quarters which started a fire in the bedding. This was brought under control by ship's company. A few minutes later we took another hit in troop #4 at the bulkhead between the engine room and troop #4.

At this point the Commanding Officer ordered the crew ashore believing that the ship was the target for the 88mm on the beach. All men got off safely except one who was wounded quite severely. During the period from about 1300 until about 2100 D-Day the beach was under heavy mortar fire, 88mm, and one large gun from the west. We dug into foxholes with the soldiers for protection, and during this period one other member of the crew was wounded. Later both were evacuated to an LST by a small boat. At about 1700-1900 an LCT, unloading ammunition was hit and set afire exploding ammunition from this ship which inflicted more damage to our ship. At 2100 the beachmaster was contacted again and we learned that no welding machines or salvage materials had arrived and we were then told to get off the beach if we could as we were doing no good there. We went back to the ship, took all the secret material and logs off and were taken to the USS LST 510 by an LCVP.

D. C. DuBrul, LT (JG) USN
Commanding Officer

"The Chief of the Boat" Reports on the 713

The 713 IS coming alive!

Thanks to Leon Gilbo, new affiliate member of the LCI National Association and head of the workers who are putting the LCI 713 together piece by piece, LCers who make the Northwest LCI Reunion this fall or our National Reunion in 2004 will see more of a living, breathing LCI than most of us ever thought we would see again.

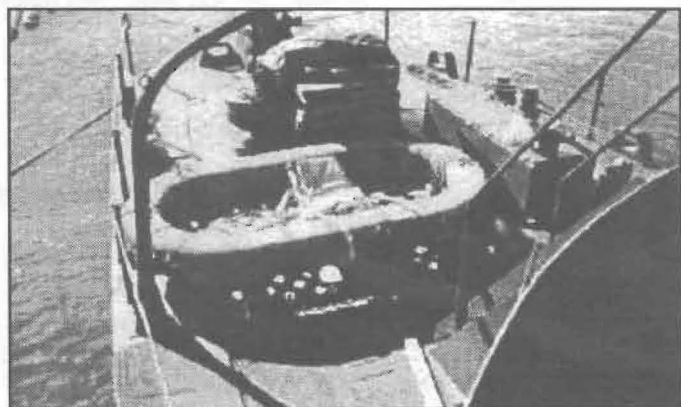
Gilbo, who has designated himself "Chief of the Boat" sends out periodic e-mail reports on the progress being made. Reading them makes one realize just what a big job it is and how much detail there is to consider. His latest report, as of May 15th is a good example:

"Well, we got all the main mess area wire wheeled and primed as far as one gallon would cover. Those idiots in supply shorted our order for paint. The frame works for the life rafts are on board. Anyway, the bent pieces are. We have to cut and fit as we go on the rest.

"The overhead wiring harness brackets are up, the full mess area to about the wardroom, some more for the bookshelves. The phone for the engine room is ready to mount. More b/p on port shear up forward by the ladder.

"The overhead light hangers are up and I think there's enough lights cleaned up for the main mess, wardroom, clipping area [I think he means the "crew's mess" where we used to "clip" or load our 20 mm magazines.] and maybe the galley and of course my compartment - the junior officer's quarters. When I finish the big feeder box by the Captain's head we'll try and run some wire - watch out for smoke!

"The allocation of equipment list says there is a fire axe and wire cutter amongst other things posted for the deck house passage. Can any of you tell us where they went? We don't have a clue! Were the wire cutter the Army Private Ryan type or the kind you have in your basement?"



A life raft is hoisted aboard the fantail of the 713

Well, there's some good questions that some of you with precise memories may be able to help Leon with!

Leon also usually attaches a picture or two to his reports so you can get a pretty good idea of how things are shaping up.

Once again, we express our gratitude to "Chief of the Boat" Gilbo and his crew for the great work they are doing. Believe me, it WILL be admired by all of us!

If you're interested in receiving Leon's report, you might drop him a line at mstrchief713@attbi.com and ask to be added to his mailing list.

Founding Officers Pass from the Scene



Robert Kirsch

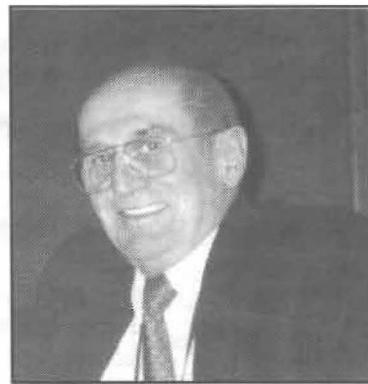
Two of the founding members of the USS LCI National Association departed from our ranks in the 2001 membership year. WALTER KOPACZ, the founding Secretary of our organization and ROBERT W. KIRSCH, founding Editor of our newsletter, "ELSIE ITEM", both died in the past year.

Walter died August 14, 2001, and Chief Kirsch died April 15, 2002, while most of us were at or traveling to the San Antonio Reunion. It was at the founding meeting of the organization in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1991 that both of these shipmates stepped forth to assume responsibilities and duties that were largely responsible for the growth and success of our Association.

Walt, as Secretary, maintained the accuracy of our membership lists as we grew to more than 3,000 members. At the outset he was probably the only officer who was computer literate and he spent many long hours on the phone with the rest of the neophyte officers to indoctrinate us into the mysteries of data management and retrieval. He was also responsible for creating our LCI website.

Chief Kirsch initiated our newsletter in August, 1991, as a single mimeographed sheet – noting therein that we had 120 members. When he relinquished the editorship of "Elsie Item" in December, 1997, it had grown to 28 pages, contained many pictures, and was printed by a commercial printer.

At the San Diego reunion in April, 1991, Walter was elected Vice President of the organization and Bob Kirsch was appointed Secretary. In their new positions Walter continued to be responsible for the upgrading and accuracy of the membership and mailing lists. Bob Kirsch continued as Editor of "Elsie Item" and maintained his membership recruiting efforts.



Walter Kopacz

WALTER KOPACZ served aboard the USS Idaho, BB 42, and LCI(G) 346. He participated in the invasions of the Marshall, Marianas, Caroline, Solomon and Ryukyu Islands. He is survived by his wife, Rose Carlin who he married in 1947. They had three daughters, Kathy, Debbie and Julie, and they also had five grandchildren.

Master Chief Gunners Mate Bob Kirsch served as a gunnery instructor in the States and then reported aboard the L.C.I.(R) 74 where he served during the invasion of Borneo. Later he also served aboard LST 694.

In 1982 Chief Kirsch retired with 40 years of Naval Reserve time. He received many awards and citations for his years of service. He was predeceased by his wife Mildred Maxwell whom he married in 1946 and also by his second wife, Frances Stifnell, whom he married in 1992. Robert had two children and five grandchildren. Robert was a dedicated and enthusiastic traveler and he last attended our Reno reunion in June 2001, accompanied by his devoted companion, Wilma Banfield.

Both Walter Kopacz and Bob Kirsch were devoted and dedicated members of the USS L.C.I. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION. Their unstinting efforts are in a large measure responsible for the organization we enjoy today.

Our naval service friends in Canada close each memorial service with the phrase:

"We Shall Remember Them"

I think that phrase is appropriate at this time:

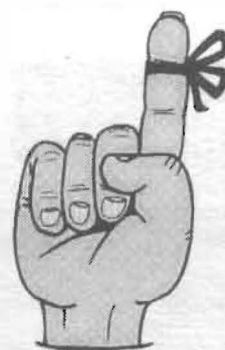
"Walter and Robert, We Shall Remember You"

-Howard B. "Tiny" Clarkson

New Additions to the LCI Association E-Mail List

Since the March, 2002, issue of *Elsie Item*
(Listed by Ship Number)

LCI	SHIPMATE	E-MAIL ADDRESS
21	Chester O'Quin	mjgoq@aol.com
31	Harold Maccombic	mac961@aol.com
67	Jack Higgins	jackhiggins@yahoo.com
194	Reginald A. Van Tassel	Dorisandvan13@cs.com
196	Robert V. Courant	rvcourant@aol.com
209	Arvid Grover	arvidgrover@aol.com
234	Francis Leonard	ritaoz@aol.com
348	Elwin Wayman	elwin_w@)!@yahoo.com
363	Harry E. Chandler	steelmanhoss@swfla.rr.com
365	Ray Read	lciread@aol.com
410	Harry L. Carter	harrycarterjr.@earthlink.net
429	Darrel Thorp	dthorpl@kscable.com
437	Fordon Arquette	garquett@tweny.rr.com
438	Joe Thornburn	joe@thornburnfamily.org
457	Richard O. Churchill	dianec@jacco.com
457	Raymond G. Wilson	ardee@netins.net
460	Stewart N. Long	lukie65@hotmail.com
501	Ernie Williams	ewills510@aol.com
515	Wesley Davis	nawd@worldnet.att.net
516	Clifford G. Porter	luckyl13d@d@worldnet.att.net
518	Stan Klein	stla2n3k@aol.com
519	Louis Sava	ges8588@yahoo.com
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517	Ross Cannella	GBC48@aol.com
558	Herbert Hoover	hoov_54@msn.co.
587	Edwin Chandler	ej1069@msn.com
590	Harry LaJoice	glajoice@aol.com
626	Robert Mrozik	rgtm@redwing.net
683	Gerald Rone	trusa@bright.net
702	Betty Hummel	gigh45@aol.com
741	Ernest Gnehm	emros@aol.com
750	Robert Pettit	blpettit@yahoo.com
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812	Harold J. Bleyhl	hbleyhl@aol.com
820	Ken Brummond	oledrum@aol.com
951	Herb Toussaint	herbtv@slamspeed.com
965	Helen Vanomy8	vanomy@frontiernet.net
1022	Joseph George	joegeo2@aol.com
1030	Marshall Boyer	lmboyer205@earthlink.net
1068	John Laudicina	jlaudl@bellsouth.net
1069	William Haddix	jmh061139@cs.com
1094	Lloyd Anderson	lloydfa@msn.com



DUES NOTICE!!

**Your 2002 Dues are
Due**

**\$10.00 Per Year
or
\$75 for a Life
Membership**

**Please send your dues
to**

**Howard "Tiny"
Clarkson
73 Grange Road
Troy, NY 12180-6662**

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Need help or information? Call on us!

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USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION FORM

If you are not a member of the USS LCI National Association and would like to join, please complete this form and mail it with your first year's dues as indicated below:

Name: _____ LCI Served On: _____ Rank/Rate: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Telephone: _____ / _____ E-Mail Address: _____

Occupation/Former Occupation: _____

Wife's Name: _____

Dues are \$10.00 per year, June 1 through May 31. Life Membership: \$75.00

Make Check payable to:

USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Send to:

Howard Clarkson, Treasurer
73 Grange Road
Troy, NY 12180

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James E. Talbert, President
147 Colburn Dr.
DeBary, FL 32713

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

