



"THE ELSIE ITEM"

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

• ESTABLISHED MAY 14-18, 1991, NORFOLK, VA •

JUNE 2006

ISSUE #56

NOT EXACTLY YOUR WWII NAVY TOWN!



*A Great Reunion
in a Beautiful City!*

Official Newsletter 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. Associate membership, without voting privileges, is offered to others.

Published quarterly by the USS LCI National Association. John P. Cummer, Editor. Any material for possible publication should be sent to the Editor at 302 Pinewood Cottage Lane, Blythewood, SC 29016

It was a great 15th Reunion!

Memories of World War II Navy Norfolk vanished as we enjoyed the lovely scenery, beautiful weather, fine hotel, excellent food and, most important of all, the fellowship of 321 LCIers and their families who rediscovered Norfolk.

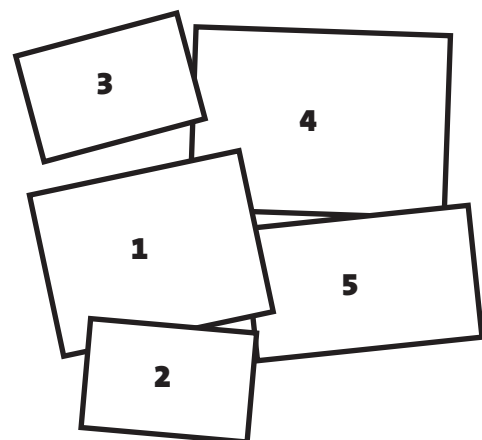
On our cover and on pages 4 and 29, we share the reunion in pictures with those of you who were not able to be there in person—and to remind those who were there of what a great time we had.

Admiral Gary E. Hall, Commander, Amphibious Group Two, and the color guard from Assault Group Four were our honored guests for the banquet.

Our banquet entertainment was provided by "The Strolling Strings", a group of some 30 high school students from the Norfolk area who were just fabulous! Just ask anyone who was there!

Here's a key to the photos on our cover

1. Everywhere, up and down the waterfront, we were greeted by beautiful mermaids!
2. A visit to the impressive MacArthur Memorial was a highlight for many.
3. On our dinner cruise we had a close-up look at some of the ships of the Modern Navy.
4. An old Motor Mac, a Gunner's Mate and two Quartermasters enjoy a visit to the bridge of the USS Wisconsin. (left to right: Jim "Bud" Lennon, John Cummer, Gordon Smith, Rod Scurlock)
5. Gordon Smith reported on the Amphibious Forces Museum, Astoria, Oregon, new home of USS LCI 713.



ECHOES OF NORFOLK

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT/EDITOR



By all reports it was one of the best reunions we've had!

In this issue of the newsletter you will read and see a good deal about the reunion. There were 321 registered, an excellent turn out, but with over 2,000 members a lot of you were not able to attend. So, I thought it well to give you a report on at least three

of the discussions and actions taken during the Executive Board meeting and the subsequent Association meeting.

I. Retiring and New Directors

As we gathered for our Executive Board meeting prior to the beginning of the reunion, it was a privilege to welcome new board members and to say farewell to others who, after long and useful service, have been elevated to emeritus status.

We said a reluctant farewell to long-time board members Sam Rizzo, Ned Hedger, Shelby Smith and Chaplain Earl Henshaw. Though health concerns have necessitated their stepping down, we will always be grateful for the service they have given to the Association over the years. Sam, for many years, directed the program of presenting LCI models to museums around the country, and we all benefited from Shelby's conscientious and informed service as Parliamentarian at our business meetings.

Although Ned was able to be with us for the Norfolk Reunion, it was a real struggle for him, and he feels that he may not be able to make any more national reunions. Sam is courageously battling severe cancer, and Shelby is confined to a nursing home. I know that cards and messages of good will and support would mean a great deal to them and to their families. Sam's address is 1700 Vernier Road, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI 48236, and Shelby can be reached at 12193 Robin Road, Maple Grove, MN, 55369. Ned can be reached at 227 San Juan Drive, Sequim, WA 98382, and Earl Henshaw's address is P.O. Box 781, Bainbridge, GA 39818. It would be wonderful if each of these faithful shipmates could be deluged with cards and messages of good will and support.

It was a genuine pleasure to announce the appointment of four outstanding shipmates – Gordon Smith, Connie Mulherin, Jim Aydelotte and Hal Bleyhl to serve as new directors. The addition of these four men brings the board up to the strength authorized by our by-laws.



Ned Hedger



Shelby Smith



Sam Rizzo



Earl Henshaw





Gordon Smith

Each of these men is well qualified to serve as a director. Gordon also serves as Chairman of the Directors of the newly established Amphibious Forces Memorial, featuring LCI 713. Connie has served as long time reunion director for LCI(G) Flotilla Six, a group which has been meeting for reunions longer than the LCI National Association. They are disbanding this year, due to decreasing attendance at their reunions, and many of them are joining our Association. Others are already members. Jim Aydelotte is the organizer of the Ohio State LCI reunions and does so by long distance (with the help of a very efficient secretary) from his home in Apache Junction, New Mexico. Hal Bleyhl has done yeoman work alongside Vice President Rod Scurlock to provide new vitalization to the state directors' program.



Connie Mulherin

II. Proposed Change in Final Distribution of Our Assets

As most of you know, our Constitution and By-Laws stipulate that, when our membership becomes less than 100, we are to pay off all debts and donate remaining funds to an organization approved by the membership. Originally, the organization specified was the U. S. Naval Memorial in Washington, D.C. With the establishment of the National D-day Museum in New Orleans, it was felt that this facility would be a more appropriate recipient for our funds, so the designation was changed to that decision.



Jim Aydelotte

Now, a proposal is being made to change the designated recipient once again. Acting upon a recommendation by Vice President Rod Scurlock and after considerable discussion, the board voted to recommend to the membership that the Amphibious Forces Museum, Astoria Washington, featuring the LCI 713, and the Humbolt Bay Naval Air and Sea Museum, Eureka, California, featuring the LCI 1091, be designated as equal recipients of our remaining funds upon dissolution. The feeling of the board, in making the recommendation for this change, was that these two projects are specifically aimed at memorializing the role of LCIs and therefore deserve our support.



Hal Bleyhl

Additionally they recommended that annual contributions be made to the Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, where the memorial to the "Amphibious Man" is being erected. [See more about this project in this issue.]

As required by the by-laws, these proposals were made to the membership at the Norfolk Reunion and will be voted upon at next year's reunion in Branson, Missouri.

You are urged to express any feelings you may have about this issue to any of the officers or board members. We will ask that state reunions set aside time at their meetings for discussion of this issue as well.



III. A Possible New Organization to Continue the Work and Memory of LCIs and LCIsers

By no means are we ready to close up shop and go home yet! But the reality of our advancing age has some of us thinking about how LCIs and the men who served aboard them could be remembered after we are gone. That, coupled with the enthusiasm and growing number of LCI children, grandchildren and others who are attending reunions and joining as affiliates, has suggested the possibility of forming an organization, which could work alongside us. With the encouragement and help of our LCI National Association, perhaps it could carry a name like the *USS LCI National Heritage Association*.

Why a separate organization? Our constitution and by-laws permit only LCI veterans "and members of the Amphibious Forces and its allies" to hold full membership. Changing that requirement could, it is argued, threaten our tax-exempt status. So the proposal is to "cut the Gordian knot", so to speak, and form a separate organization to which children, grandchildren, etc. could belong. This separate organization could meet concurrently with LCI National Association reunions at the state or national level with activities planned to encourage their growing interest. Perhaps then, many of us feel, as our association members age and inevitably attendance dwindles, this "daughter" organization could pick up the torch and continue the work of memorializing our service in LCIs. Not to put too grandiose an edge on it, but one could think of such organizations as the Sons of the American Revolution or the Daughters of the American Revolution as models for our new group.

During the coming year, efforts will be intensified to locate and enlist leadership for such a group and to encourage LCI State Directors to do all they can to further the involvement of coming generations.

Is there a role for you to perform here? Most certainly, and especially if you are one of those sons, daughters, widows, grandchildren or other family members who finds satisfaction and reward in preserving the memories of the men who sailed those tough, dependable and effective little craft during World War II. A note from any of you to the editor is all that it would take to get involved!

Till next issue!

John Cummer

YOUR 2006 DUES ARE NOW DUE!

"Keep the Newsletter Coming!"

Please mail your dues (\$15) to

**HOWARD B. "TINY" CLARKSON, TREASURER
USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
73 GRANGE ROAD
TROY, NY 12180-6662**



WELCOME ABOARD!

*It's a genuine pleasure to post this list of new members—especially the nice list of affiliates.
It speaks well of our future!*

*We're including hometowns with this list so that State Directors can follow up in
welcoming these new members.*

New Members

LCI 70, John M. Hardy,
Cornelia, GA
LCI 332 and 654, Calvin C. Reeves,
Perryville, MD
LCI 355 and 423, Donald G. Lambrecht,
Green Bay, WI
LCI 433, Frank Warner,
Maison, CT
LCI 514, Daniel Mendelsohn,
Warrenville, IL
LCI 692, Thomas Jacobson,
Hunlock Creek, PA
LCI 821, William C. Todd,
Fulton, MO
LCI 1011 and 659, Eugene Corson,
Kill Devil Hills, NC
LCI 1024, Fred M. Greene
Jerry N. Gilmartin, Portland, Or
(*Volunteer worker on LCI 713*)

New Life Members

LCI 456, Garel Satterfield,
West Clinton, SC
LCI 511, Gordon J. Kus,
Falmouth, ME
LCI 624, Donald W. Atkinson,
Bowling Green, MO
LCI 638, William S. Orr,
Tulsa, OK
LCI 638, Boyd L. Hedrick,
Lexington, NC
John K. Eger, Son of William Eger,
LCI 663, Lakewood, CO

LCI 725, George E. Swain,
New Castle, DE
LCI 741, Richard L. DeHaven,
Stuart, FL
LCI 766, Robert E. Taibl,
Westchester, IL
LCI 790, Schuyler P. Kellogg,
Niles, MI
LCI 982, Albert Drukalski,
Pittsburgh, PA

New Affiliates:

Ronald D. Kreisel, Son of Jesse Kreisel,
LCI 330, Hudson, WI
Randal K. Kreisel, Son of Jesse Kreisel,
LCI 330, Flower Mound, TX
Erin Montgomery, Granddaughter of
Jesse Kreisel, LCI 330, Webster Groves, MO
Kristin Woodcock, Granddaughter of
Jesse Kreisel, LCI 330, Austin, TX
Ronald J. Smith, Son of Ronald H.
Smith, LCI 24, Richmond, VA
Mary K. Landry, Daughter of Robert
E. Dolan, LCI 26, Fridley, MN
Judith Zindler, Daughter of Robert
E. Dolan, LCI 26, Benton Harbor, MI

New Affiliates Becoming Life Members

Jay Lance, Beaverton, OR
(*Volunteer worker on LCI 713*)



STATE DIRECTORS MEET AT REUNION

“You are the conduit and the glue!”

With these words, Hal Blyehl joined Rod Scurlock in challenging state directors to step forward and be leaders in getting information out to members in their areas and in extending and enriching the organization by their efforts at the local level.

A large group of state directors, many newly appointed, attended a breakfast meeting at the Norfolk reunion where they heard suggestions from experienced directors as to how they might organize local gatherings and promote fellowship among LCLers.



State Directors get the word!

Just to make sure that all State Directors “got the word”. Hal e-mailed each of them a summary of the meeting and a collection of pictures from the reunion. He told them:

“We had a nice turn out of state directors at our Saturday meeting where V.P. Rod Scurlock outlined some of our thinking and needs for the benefit of our unique organization. You are the fellows with the local contacts that can keep the information lines open as to meetings, moves, deaths, phones changes, e-mail, membership, etc., to keep them from dropping off of the radar screen. YES, YOU ARE THE CONDUIT AND THE GLUE that will keep this organization going, and we (I mean all 2,000 plus of us) thank you for your commitment. Whatever you need or whatever questions you have, I will try to get the right answers for you.”



“ON WATCH” MONUMENT HONORS AMPHIBIOUS SAILORS



**Calvert County Commissioner
Linda Kelley**

“We’re determined to finish this project just as soon as possible,” said Linda Kelley, Calvert County Commissioner who is heading up fund-raising for the eight-foot bronze statue to be erected on the site of the Amphibious Training Base, Solomons, Maryland. The site is often referred to as the “Cradle of Invasions” because of the thousands of sailors, marines and soldiers who trained there for amphibious operations during World War II.

Taking time out of her busy schedule to report on the project to the LCIers assembled in Norfolk for their 15th reunion, Ms Kelley reported that, of the \$135,000 needed for the total project, only \$40,000 remains to be raised.

“Funds in excess of \$45,000 have been raised through in-kind contributions, the World War II Veterans’ community, the local community and a number of civic organizations,” said Kelly.

“Additionally, the State of Maryland has authorized a bond bill in the amount of \$50,000.”

The monument portrays a sailor, looking out to sea. It will face the water where it will have high visibility. Surrounding the statue will be a Veteran’s Plaza to commemorate the service of WWII Veterans.

LCIers are given the opportunity to support this memorial through the Memorial Brick Project. The plaza will contain 1,000 bricks, each bearing the rank and name, branch of service, and beginning and ending years of the veteran’s military service during WWII. The cost of each memorial brick is \$100. Each veteran honored with a memorial brick will receive a certificate, suitable for framing, showing the exact wording of the brick.

A downloadable version of the application for bricks may be obtained from this website:
www.cradleofinvasion.org/memorial.htm

Applications may also be obtained by contacting Sherrod Sturrock at the Calvert Marine Museum:
410/326-2042, ext. 32

E-MAIL CORRECTIONS

Please make the following change
and corrections to your list of
LClers E-Mail Addresses

LCI	NAME/CORRECT E-MAIL
-----	---------------------

336	Vincent L. Robinson vincer@ftcnet.net
351	Keith Cooper marykeith1@verizon.net
423	Donald G. Lambrecht alterfurster@aol.com
433	Frank Warner febwarner@erols.com
514	Daniel Mendelsohn dfellman@bigplanet.com
561	Clifford F. Beckwith Cliffb865@frontiernet.net
613	Robert Byhenny Irish263@aol.com
821	William C.Todd nnickelson@msn.com
965	Calvin I. Crance Wa4bdf@verizon.net

Please forward any changes or corrections
in e-mail addresses to:

Jim Tallbert
tab626@cox.net

or by regular mail at
12238 Woodland Trail, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

MOBILE, ALABAMA, SELECTED FOR 2008 REUNION

After listening to presentation from Ted Dey, President of Armed Forces Reunions, the board of directors voted unanimously to select Mobile, Alabama, as the site for the 2008 national reunion.

The dates for the reunion will be April 30 to May 4, 2008.

Following the decision made last year to hold future national reunions in the central part of the country, Dey was asked to examine sites and make recommendations on Mobile, Kansas City and Milwaukee.

After listening to presentations concerning hotels and amenities in all three cities, Mobile was selected. This favorable location on the gulf coast has the attraction of the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial and the outstanding Naval Aviation Museum in nearby Pensacola, Florida. They were cited by the board members as factors making them decide for Mobile. Another possible visit could be to the shipyards at Pascagoula, MS, to see new ships under construction. Excellent seafood restaurants and the beautiful Bellingrath Gardens were also appealing.

Dey reported that rates will be higher due to the "seller's market" with little or no new hotel construction underway and a significant increase in the demand for convention/reunion space.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

**APRIL 30—MAY 4 FOR OUR
2008 REUNION IN
BEAUTIFUL MOBILE!**



More Evidence of what Good-Looking, Cocky Swabbies We Were!

Yep, still more of you have responded with pictures of your crews, so we just had to keep this feature going so you'd have something to brag about to the grandkids! Some of these don't have identification of all the men, but we thought you'd enjoy seeing them anyhow. And remember, there's still room in coming issues for your crew picture!



Umberto "Bond" Bonosoro sent this fine picture of the crew of his LCI—the 709.

Bond says, "What I cannot remember is how was it that all but one of us are in CLEAN skivvie shirts!"

Bond now lives in Sun City Center, Florida.

...and from the other side of the globe comes this picture of the crew of LCI 414, taken in Lymington, England, shortly after the D-Day landings. It comes to us from Roland T. Harris who served aboard the 414 and now lives in Sandusky, Ohio.

Perhaps the fact that the 414 was a flotilla flagship explains why these guys are all "spit and polish" in their dress blues!





...but then, maybe not! Here's another spiffy crew and it's not a flotilla flagship. Robert Norris, of Santa Barbara, CA, who served as Communications Officer aboard the LCI 1026, sends this crew photo taken on commissioning day, 19 June 1944 at the Albina Engine and Machine Shop, Portland, Oregon. Bob's the boyish-looking Ensign on the far right of the first row.

Here's one of a crew looking much more like how we remember ourselves! Verlin Creed, of Englewood, Colorado, sends this picture of the crew of LCI 444 taken in Lae, New Guinea, in 1944.

We really wish we had the ability to reproduce the old newspaper photo Verlin sent that was taken while the 444 was being outfitted at Pier 43, New York. It shows some famous actresses including Gertrude Lawrence and Celeste Holm "adopting" the LCI 444 for the Stage Door Canteen.



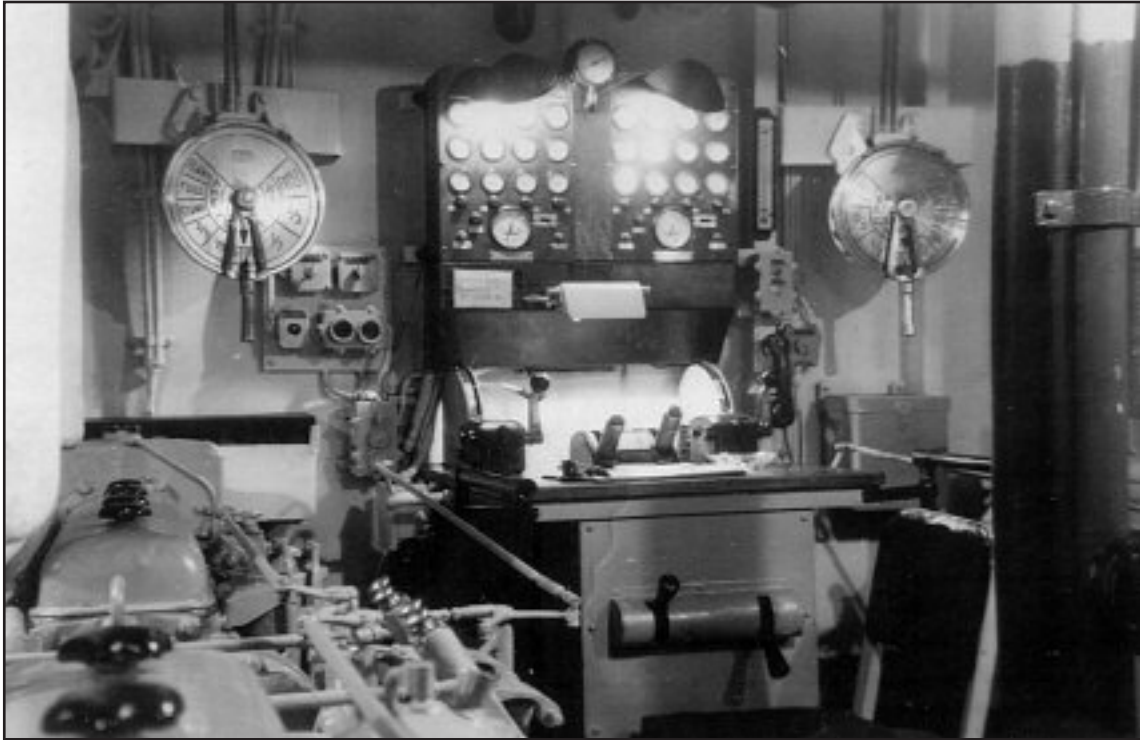


About this one, John Hoffman, St. Charles, MO, describes his ship-mates of LCI 73 as: "...a young, single and carefree group of guys who endured air raids, enemy action on beaches and all the oceans could throw at us!"

Finally, at least for this issue, Bill Werz, Lebanon, PA, dug this out of the port side liberty section, LCI(G) 464 enjoying some R&R on Saipan. Bill writes, "The condition of this picture isn't too bad considering that it was taken almost 61 years ago."



ONE TO MAKE YOU OLD MOTOR MACS HOMESICK!



OK! Here's one for all of you old Motor Macs who've just about forgotten what the engine room on an LCI looked like! Bob McGhee of Phoenix, AZ, who put in his time on the throttle board of LCI 579, sent us this photo to share with you! Look familiar?

ANOTHER REMINDER! YOUR DUES ARE NOW DUE!

Please send your check for \$15 to:

**Howard B. Clarkson, Treasurer
73 Grange Road
Troy, NY 12180-6662**



LCI 492 at D-day, Normandy

By
Peter Fantacone,
May's Landing, New Jersey

With another anniversary of D-Day just around the corner, it seems an appropriate time to print another LCIers recollections of that memorable day. Peter Fantacone served aboard LCI 492. He continues his interest in the Navy through his involvement in the USS LCI National Association and by acting as a volunteer tour guide aboard the USS New Jersey. After retiring from The Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Steam Turbine Division, he has made his home at May's Landing with his wife Eva.



Peter in 1943



...and today, with his wife, Eva

It was the end of May 1944 that I reported aboard the USS LCI 492, a couple of weeks prior to D-Day, June 6, 1944. This was my first look at a Landing Craft Infantry, Large. The LCI was the smallest ocean going ship in the Navy. She carried a crew of 24 enlisted men and 4 officers with a troop carrying capacity of about 200.

The place was the seaport town of Weymouth on the southern coast of England. The LCI 492 along with the other LCIs of Flotilla 10 were tied up at the pier, three or four abreast. Our ship was outboard, which necessitated crossing over two or three LCIs if we wanted to go ashore. Flotilla 10 was made up of some Coast Guard and some Navy LCIs. The Coast Guard LCIs were battle hardened, having made landings in Africa and Italy. Campaign ribbons and battle stars were painted on their cons. LCIs 85 and 87 were two of them.





The Crew of the 492

Darkness fell about 11 pm or midnight and about this time each night, prior to the invasion, general quarters would be sounded as the Germans made their nightly bombing run on our port. The LCIs would immediately head out of the harbor for open water. My station was below deck, and I could hear the fire of our 20mm guns and then explosions around us. After a while we would secure from general quarters and head back to the pier. Fortunately, our ships suffered no casualties during these nightly raids, but it kept us from getting a good night's sleep, since by the time we secured from GQ it was about 0400.

On coming back to the ship from a short liberty about 3pm on June 3rd or 4th, I found the complete pier area and ships crowded with soldiers. I had to work my way through the troops and their equipment on the inboard LCIs until I got to my ship. We were loaded with troops who were combat engineers. To me, it seemed something was about to happen but my shipmates, who had been on the LCI for some time, assured me that it was just another practice run, one of the many they had experienced over the past months.

Late on the afternoon of June 5th, it was announced that there would be a Catholic Mass on the pier for all those who wanted to attend. At Mass time the pier was packed with soldiers and sailors so much so they spilled over onto the ships. I think every soldier and sailor from those ships was at Mass that afternoon. When the Chaplain gave General Absolution during the mass, I knew then this was a sure sign that this was not another practice run.

At approximately 1700, special sea detail was set and we got underway from our pier in Weymouth, England. As we left the harbor we sailed past Portland Bill that jutted out into the Channel. The weather was dull and gray and the sea was rough. We were taking spray over the bow. I looked out as we reached the open sea. I saw ships and more ships -- landing craft, patrol craft, troop transports -- breaking through the seas and all heading for France. It was at this time that the Captain read over the loud speaker, General Eisenhower's "Order of the Day":

"Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force. You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you. Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! . . . The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory! I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We

will accept nothing less than full victory! Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."

Our Flotilla 10 had the USS LCI 87 leading the starboard column, our LCI 492, leading the middle column, and the USS LCI 408 leading the port column. The USS LCI 492, acting as headquarters ship, set the course for France. I remember on this trip that my stomach didn't feel the greatest with the rough seas, the flat bottom and, most of all, the smell of the diesel fumes. We must have had a following wind, for the fumes kept blowing from the stern forward for the whole trip. After sailing all night, we arrived off the coast of Normandy at about 0830 and began circling in the rendezvous area.

June 6th was a dull gray day with rough, choppy seas. At about 0500 the battleships *Texas* and *Arkansas* unleashed a tremendous barrage of fire power from their 14 and 12 inch guns. The cruisers *Tuscaloosa*, *Augusta*, and *Quincy* and other ships joined them in firing at positions on the beach. I was stationed at the bow of the ship, as we circled, manning a radio and listening to communications when the first wave landed on Omaha at about 0630. All I kept hearing on the radio were garbled words, which included "easy red" and "easy fox". I later learned that these were the designation of beach areas where the landings were taking place. Spray was coming over the bow so much that the paper pad I was writing on was useless from getting wet.

Twelve LCIs of Flotilla 10, including our ship, were assigned to land troops on Omaha Beach. The tides at Normandy were of tremendous length. Since the Germans had all kinds of obstacles on the beach to stop, impale or blow up the landing craft, we would land at low tide in order to avoid these obstacles. However, the problem was that the dead and wounded would be engulfed as the tide came in and would be floating around in the water. This we witnessed.

We landed on Omaha beach at approximately 0739, about one hour after the first wave. I remember, when looking at the beach, seeing all the wreckage of equipment burning and smoke everywhere. We backed off the beach and proceeded to the waters just off Omaha. The LCI 492 was lucky. Of the 12 LCIs of our Flotilla that landed at Omaha, four were lost due to heavy artillery, machine gun fire and mines. The four lost were the LCIs 91, 92, 93 and 85. Two others, the 83 and the 88, were severely damaged. All suffered casualties of both crew and troops. The 85 capsized and sank. We saw her floating bottom up. She had tried twice to land her troops under heavy fire and had hit a mine. It was hard to believe that a little more than 12 hours earlier I had attended Mass and received General Absolution with the troops and crews of these LCIs on the pier at Weymouth. We came back off the beach a few hundred yards and performed other duties off Omaha for the rest of the day.

One sight in which all tin can sailors can take pride was the way the destroyers swept in close to Omaha Beach and delivered gunfire into the German positions from late morning and into the afternoon. These destroyers were called in to furnish the only direct artillery support the infantry had on Omaha Beach.

Sometime during the day, two German planes came out of nowhere and flew so close over us you could almost touch them. They did not fire or drop anything on us and were gone in an instant.

Also, as the day progressed, we started seeing the results of the battle on the beach. The rescue and recovery of the wounded and the dead was assigned to the Coast Guard, which also manned their 83 footers. These small, wooden craft were all over in these rough seas doing their work. We also picked



up survivors and dead from a life raft, which came from a British destroyer that had hit a mine. We also circled an LST that was floating bow up. It had hit a mine also. Survivors were probably picked up by another ship.

As the day drew to a close and darkness fell, two things remain to be mentioned. One was the German E Boats. These boats, similar to our PT Boats, would infiltrate the invasion fleet and torpedo ships or they would lay mines. Secondly, on this first night, the Germans mounted an air raid on the invasion fleet. Never in my life will I probably see such a display of firepower as was delivered by approximately 5,000 ships. It was like a thousand Fourth of Julys rolled into one. Tracers filled the sky so that it looked like a curtain of fire. So much was thrown up in the air that you had to wear your helmet on deck, because you could hear the pieces of metal hit the deck as they fell from the sky. This display of firepower was a fitting end for D-Day. We ended up at the finish of D-Day in good shape. The LCI 492 was still afloat and only the Quartermaster had been slightly wounded.

As for the 492 and myself, we stayed off Omaha Beach for the next two months, performing duties ranging from rescues to directing men and materials onto the beach. We rode out the worst storm in a hundred years only about ten days after the invasion.

A Stern Winch-Powered Ice Cream Freezer!

By
John W. Cox
LCI 551
Oregon City, Or

And you thought that winch on the fantail was supposed to be used to haul in the stern anchor? Well, maybe—but John Cox shows us a better use!

We were in Bizerte, North Africa, and found out that there was an ice machine at the Officer's Club, so we got permission to get a couple of buckets of chipped ice. Then we found we had been issued two 6-quart hand-cranked ice cream freezers. I think they were given to us by the shipyard workers at Barber, New Jersey.

The Cook found a recipe for vanilla custard ice cream, so we started accumulating the necessary ingredients—powdered milk and the other fixings. Soon we were in business.

The freezers were in a wooden tub with a dasher in a cylinder topped off with a lid. It had a gearbox with a shaft connected to a wheel. This wheel had a crank handle on it.

We were sitting on K-ration boxes cranking away and the wheels started turning in my head. There had to be an easier way.

Well, as you probably remember, the stern anchor winch had a pair of drum-like devices one on either side. I found out that the freezers, sitting on a K-ration box, were just the right height, so I took a



Stilson wrench from the engine room, removed the crank handles and sat the boxes and freezers by the two winch drums and lashed the wheels to the drums with a heaving line.

So, by idling the engines and with the line-heaving drums turning we were making ice cream. Viola!

The only trouble was that on one tub the mixture was slowly spewing out of the can. Then some smart seaman figured out that the trouble was that in one of the freezers the paddles were turning backwards!

So, we decided to finish the one that was turning in the right direction and then put the other freezer on that side.

Well, now we were tied alongside the 552, which had the Group Commander and other brass hats aboard. They became interested in what six or eight swabbies were doing, standing around watching a six cylinder Chrysler engine powering a hand-cranked freezer. Just as you might expect, they worked their slide rules and came to the conclusion that there was ample manpower going to waste and too much wear and tear on the engine!

So, the Engineering Officer came over to us and told us to dismantle our gas-powered ice cream machine – and to be sure to call him when the ice cream was finished!

Which we never did!

WWII REMEMBRANCE CANES

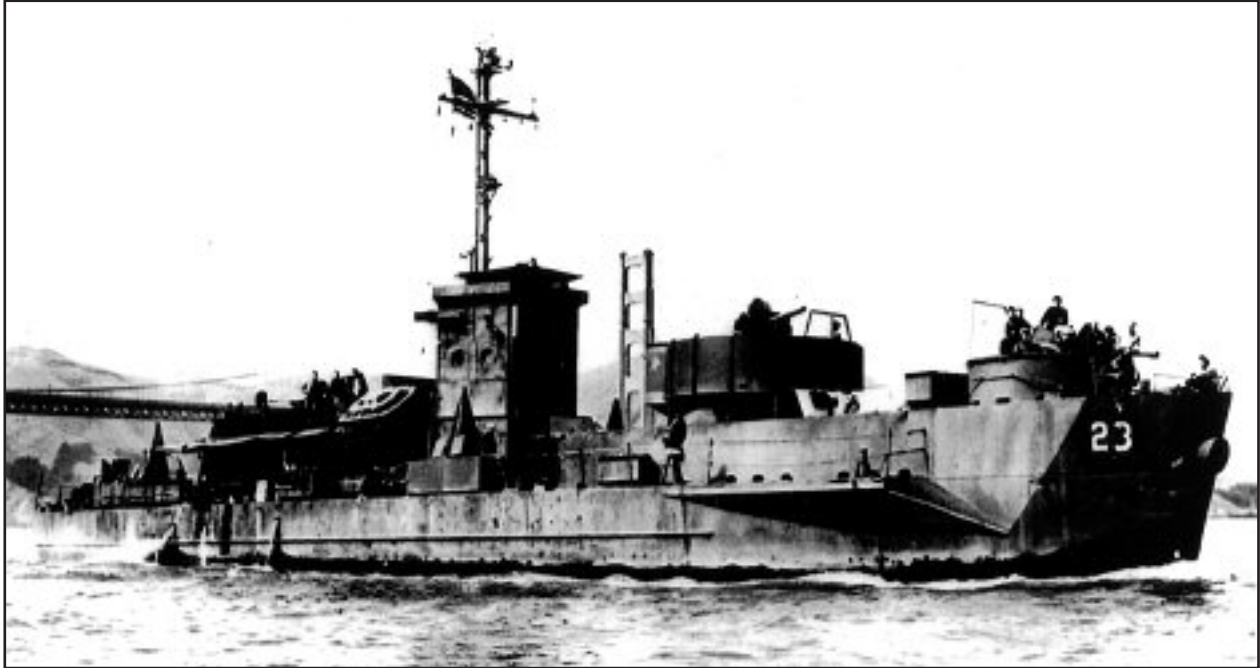
CUSTOM HAND CARVED
A REFLECTION
OF YOUR HISTORY/LCI/RANK/RATE/ SYMBOLS, ETC

CALL FOR INFORMATION
TOM MAYES, LCI 492
SMITHFIELD, VA
757/255-0726



MY LIFE AS AN LCI GUNBOAT SAILOR

By
Charles R. Ports
Tacoma, Washington



USS LCI(G) 23 sails home under the Golden Gate Bridge in late 1945



Charlie Potts in 1945



...and today!

In 1943 during my senior year in high school, I enlisted in the Navy. On completing boot camp in San Diego, California, I was sent to Noumea, New Caledonia for assignment. There I received gunnery training



and on 15 October 1943, was received on board USS LCI (G) 23.

On 27 October 1943, I witnessed my first combat at Blanche Harbor, Treasury Islands, as the first loader of the 3" 50 gun, the combat station I held until I departed the vessel. We were close enough to the beach that small arms fire was ricocheting off our structure and on our strafing; one could see bodies falling from the trees. Two LSTs were beached and were unloading under mortar fire when we moved into a visual position and placed several rounds of 3"50 into an area from where smoke was coming. We hung around a bit but on leaving the area, the mortar attack resumed so we moved back and placed several more rounds into the suspected position after which no further action was detected.

Our steering posts were leaking so badly that we were sent to Morts Dry Dock, Sidney, Australia, for repairs. I had asked our Skipper, LT Ben A. Thirkield, to assign me to the "black gang", going so far as to have my supervisor at the Car Ports Depot, El Paso, Texas, write a letter of recommendation. The Skipper informed me that the slots were all filled so my request was denied.

We had a good time and ate well while visiting Sidney. When we departed, the Coral Sea was as smooth as glass, but suddenly erupted into waves coming over the stern and washing all the way to the bow. Our screws were out of the water as much as they were in. While out of the water, the engines would scream and almost stall when the stern re-entered the water. We eventually lost both gearboxes and were towed into Noumea, New Caledonia. Needing someone to dismantle the engine room, I turned in my chipping hammer and went to busting nuts. On arriving at Noumea we were ready to swing out the old and install new or rebuilt gearboxes and eight engines. I learned fast the mechanics of the vessel.

A supervisor is to develop potential of a subordinate. LTJG W. J. DeWitt would give me books to read and query me on them while we sat on the

bridge deck. In a short while I was promoted to Fireman, First Class, and shortly thereafter to Motor Machinist Mate, Third Class. I was later designated fuel and oil king for my watch and placed in charge of all deck equipment, winches, fog generator and auxiliary pumps.

We proceeded to Bouganville via Tulagi and on to Florida Island, which was our headquarters at that time. On arrival one could see the beaches had not been cleared of the landing craft lost in the initial landing and the airstrip construction by the CBs was well under way. Often we would see aircraft so damaged you would wonder how they could fly or attempt to land.

Equipped with radar, a scarce piece of equipment at the time, we patrolled the coast of the island night after night and the intelligence gathered was unknown to me. Early one day we escorted a reconnaissance party loaded in LCMs and LCVPs to a point on the northwest coast and returned the same day without event. On 29 November 1943 we were not so fortunate in landing a Marine raiding force at Koairis, an island located in Empress Augusta Bay. After the Marines went ashore they came under heavy attack and the landing craft attempted to return and retrieve them. They came under more heavy enemy fire and withdrew to a safe distance. We made several starboard runs, bombarding the area to soften up the pressure on the Marines. Each round of the 3"50 ammunition was passed under the gun to the first loader, requiring a knee bend each time. At the end of the day I could hardly stand from the trembling after doing so many squats.

The Marines were outnumbered three to one and suffered seventeen killed in action, seven missing in action and ninety-seven wounding during the engagement. They were only able to be retrieved after fighter aircraft and a destroyer arrived on the scene at dusk. On covering the withdrawal, we picked up several combatants swimming to safety.

After more patrol duty we returned to Tulagi for



re-supply and medical attention as most of the crew had dysentery, with a good number being hospitalized.

We were then assigned to patrol the St. George Channel between New Britain and New Ireland islands to stop any re-supply effort between the Japanese who occupied that area. We were there three days in and one day out for rest and then back in. While in the Rabaul area, the most eerie sound would be heard at night when the area was being bombed. The bombs would scream and sound like they were coming down on you. The Japanese must have been terrified.

During patrol we would pick up mines floating on the surface and approach them carefully, blowing them when found. At night we would try for visual contact but often had to give up and depart the area.

We spotted a vessel concealed at the shore line in the jungle and fired a few rounds of 3"50 into it, setting it afire. The fire was quickly extinguished. We fired a few more rounds again setting it afire before leaving the area.

Our operational base then became Hollandia, New Guinea.

An LCT loaded with radar equipment was caught in a storm and washed ashore on some small island. I think it was called Treasure Island. Some LCIs, trying to drag her from the beach developed mechanical problems so we were sent in to aid in the recovery. As much sand as possible was removed with fire hoses to attempt to drag her to the water. LeRoy C. Tichenor and myself volunteered to stay aboard the LCT to keep the handy billies pumping water out of the hull with orders to abandon ship if anything went wrong. When we were towed to a suitable beach, the pumps were stopped and the vessel immediately sank to the bottom.

The only time we carried troops aboard was when we took a reconnaissance party with a couple of Somoan guides to an unknown shore on

New Guinea. On return they reported that nothing was found.

On 15 September 1943 we invaded Morotai. I do not remember anything of importance, but I was impressed by the destruction the LCI Rocket Ships caused. We learned that you don't want to be on either side of them as those rockets didn't want to always go in a forward path. The 31st Infantry Division occupied the island in an effort to secure control of the north Molucca Sea.

On October 20th, we formed up for the invasion of Leyte, Philippines, with the battle ship *New Jersey* firing over our heads. We went in to what I think was Yellow Beach, providing fire support for the troops being landed on the left most beach. We had to go between some fish traps constructed of bamboo poles and they could have been located on a sand bar as assumed by our later actions. There were three or four LCIs entering the area and the Japanese selected the last vessel to fire on, causing some damage. However, we were able to land the troops and get out of there.

For the next few days we laid around the Leyte Gulf where the flotilla was exposed to Japanese air strikes.

On October 22, 1944, while standing by at Tacloban waiting for a landing party to form up, a kamikaze in a two-engine bomber (Betties, I think we called them) lined up on us when our 3 inch shell burst either caused the pilot to flinch or the concussion knocked him off course. In missing us, his right wing struck the 20mm stern gun tub of the vessel next to us and went into the water. I do not know how many casualties or what damage was done. Though there were a lot of guns aimed at the aircraft, I only remember the burst that I have reason to think came from our gun.

While heading north through the San Jacinto Straits between Leyte and Samar Islands, many Japanese bodies were sighted. The Filipinos may well have been having their revenge.



Somewhere in the Strait a suspicious party of three men was trying to cross to Samar Island in a small wooden boat and, on being challenged, tried a suicide mission. One strapped some explosives to his waist and handed a cord to another person and started to swim toward us. We took one shot-up prisoner aboard, which the Skipper, LTJG Russell immediately ordered to be transferred to another vessel as he had a hatred for those people for reasons from a previous experience.

Prepared to provide fire support, we continued through the Strait landing the First Squadron, 7th Cavalry at Babatngon on October 24, 1944, without incident. The following morning, while we lined up for breakfast, we came under attack by an aircraft. I do not know if General Quarters was ever called as we scrambled to our battle stations. We fired on two other aircraft before being badly hit. My record shows 10 killed in action, 24 wounded and 19 not reporting injury, which were all crew of LCI(G) 23. I was wounded in both knees, both thighs, both buttocks, groin, left forearm and wrist.

The Skipper ordered us to abandon ship and I was the last to leave the 3" gun tub. On reaching the main deck I jumped into an LCM that had pulled up alongside us and took us to the beach. On arrival at the beach I walked maybe 20 yards when a Filipino approached me with a chair and soon a stretcher arrived. On being placed on the stretcher, I could not even raise my head. That is what shock can do to you.

I was carried to a foxhole where first aid was administered and I was hooked up for blood plasma. Later, I and other shipmates were loaded onto an LCM and were taken back through the Straits to Tacloban.

Somewhere in the Strait we came under attack, and I learned the difference between being scared and real fear when someone said, "Here they come again!" and the LCM crew started firing their weapons.

The 58th Army Hospital had me under their care for maybe a week. At first they tried to evacuate me by air, but after three tries put me on the *Pickney*, a troop transport, as the airfield continued to be a Japanese target.

The *Pickney* headed toward Noumea, New Caledonia, when it was diverted to Manus Island to pick up casualties from the *USS Mt. Hood*, an ammunition ship that blew up on 10 November 1944. Seaman, First Class, Dick Barns, the only man busted while serving on LCI(G) 23, was a convalescent patient being evacuated on the same vessel. He saw to it that I and those around me had coffee each morning. I will always owe him a debt of gratitude for that.

At Noumea I was bed-ridden for a while and around Christmas, when the last vessel left for the States, I asked a doctor why I was not on it. His reply was that they were going to get me fixed up and return me to duty. I didn't want to hear that, but my hospitalization continued.

Shortly after the first of the year 1945, I arrived at Farragut, Idaho, where I went through physiotherapy and a nerve operation and was discharged on 15 July 1945 on a medical discharge with healing not stabilized. I have since had surgery three times to remove shrapnel.

On becoming a civilian I chose to put my bad memories behind me, and this is the first time I have tried to recall them. Many dates are not noted because I do not recall them and minute details are omitted.

My employment took me to many corners of the world and all over the United States. I was not aware that there was an LCI National Association until after I retired. I have enjoyed establishing contact with the members of my crew for which the Association has been able to provide names and addresses.



SURVIVING THE OCTOBER, 1945 TYPHOON AT OKINAWA: THE SAGA OF LCI(G) 470

By
Delbert C. Hollinger
Pismo Beach, California



LCI(G) 470 on the reef at Okinawa

The Elsie Item article on the October 9, 1945, typhoon at Buckner Bay, Okinawa, brought back a host of memories. I was on the LCI(G) 470, which was listed as going aground in the official reports.

We were in the September 1945, typhoon also. We had been sent to Kerama Retto to help get an LST off the beach. When we returned to Buckner Bay after that task, we re-anchored downwind of a large concrete supply barge. During the storm the barge broke loose and broke our anchor cable. We had to get underway and move back and forth at the entrance of the submarine net that was used to protect the harbor. When the big ships were ordered to go to sea, we were herded out with them.

The average swells at that time were 60 feet. We were out there for three and a half days. One wave broke over the radar pod on the mast and disabled it. We also had the electric steering go out when the generator went off line. We broached in those conditions but recovered when the standby generator came on line. We did lose one man at the harbor entrance as we were tossing over the rocket racks and ammunition to lighten the weight topside.



When the October storm arrived our captain was not eager to go to sea again. I was on radio watch when we were ordered by the Group Commander to go out again. I was told to send a message saying that we were beached and secure, even though we were not. We then headed in to Baten Ko and beached on a reef near there. We then had a front row seat watching the rest of the 222 ships hit the beach. The total damage to our LCI was a bent rudder shaft. We were pulled off the beach by two LCMs from the Warhawk on October 21, 1945, and were repaired by an LSD. Our entire Group was on the beach at the end of that storm.



Taken at the height of the storm, this picture shows a PC capsizing off the bow of our LCI. In the center you can make out the figures of some of the crew of the PC crawling across the reef.

This picture shows the final position of the PC with the *SS John Rawlins* in the background.



...and this jumble of ships is the *ARB Nestor* with its bow through the stern of another ship and with a YTB next to the *Nestor*.

It was truly a storm I will never forget!

—*Delbert C. Hollinger*



FATHER AND SON SHARE THE SAME SHIP NUMBER!

Now here's a real coincidence for you!

It's a long way from the amphibious Navy of World War II to the age of nuclear Submarines, but here's a most interesting link.

William Eger proudly served during World War II in LCI(L) 663 as she participated in the Leyte Gulf landings and other operations during the Pacific war. He returns home, raises a family including his son John, who follows his Dad into the Navy; but with no more LCIs to serve in, John elects the next best thing—a nuclear submarine.

Then one day recently, John's wife, while reminiscing with him over some old photographs of John's dad notices that John's nuclear submarine has the very same hull number as his Dad's LCI – 663!

It was a privilege to have John and his wife, Carmen, with us for our Norfolk reunion.



Here's William and LCI 663



...and here's John and SSN 663!



THE SINKING OF LCI(L) 1 IN LAKE BIZERTE

By
Curtis S. "Boots" Boutillier
Cheshire, Oregon

We're indebted to Paul Mascatelli, who served aboard Coast Guard-manned LCI 324, for passing on this first hand account of the sinking of LCI(L) 1 in Lake Bizerte, North Africa. Paul's LCI picked up some of the surviving members of the crew of LCI(L) 1. Recently he was able to contact one of them, Curtis Boutillier, who passed on this account to him.

The LCI(L) 1 received the Presidential Unit Citation for its actions during the invasion of Sicily. Crew members accumulated one Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, one Legion of Merit and twelve Purple Hearts.

After the mauling LCI 1 took at Licata Beach during the Sicily invasion, she was towed to Tunis for repairs. The bullet holes were patched, two new screws were installed and then we were off to Bizerte to await the Salerno landing.

We tied up to the sub docks and somehow a line fouled one of our screws. I was elected to borrow a 48" pipe wrench so we could reverse the shaft and clear the screw. This happened late in the day when it was almost dark.

The air raid alarm sounded. Since no ships were allowed at the docks during a raid, we pulled away on one screw. By this time it was dark and the searchlights were probing the black sky. The anti-aircraft guns on land and on the ships were booming.

Bernie Bever, Motor Mac, Second Class, and I (a Fireman, First Class) were in the engine room at battle stations. I believe we had only gone a short distance from the docks when we took a bomb amidships, just aft of the conn. It hit in such a place as to explode in the crew's quarters. As far as I know none of the crew were killed although many were wounded. Bernie and I were at the screw engine control station. In an instant our entire space was on fire. The explosion ruptured the bulkhead between the crew's quarters and the engine room. The day fuel tanks ruptured and allowed diesel oil to flow into the bilges. The blast tipped the electrical switchboard down across the ladder out of the engine room. The flames were coming up and around the engines. I remember saying to Bernie, "Let's get the hell out of here!"

I do believe our burns were caused by the flash rather than by the flames. Had the explosion caused us to lose consciousness, even for a short time, we would have been doomed. We ran to the ladder and, with the switchboard blocking our escape, I grabbed the handrail. Our Motor Mac, First Class, had had us wrap the handrails with linen line and shellac them. As a result, the handrails were on fire and my left hand slipped off. I grabbed again and Bernie gave me a boost and up I went. I reached down and helped Bernie out. Bernie did not have on a shirt. I had a washed-out denim shirt on with a small hole in the back and with rolled-up sleeves. Bernie was badly burned on the upper body and I also had second-degree burns on my arms, ears and neck. What makes me think they were flash burns is that the small hole in my shirt allowed a small burn on my back. We had our backs to the explosion.



Coming out on deck, Bernie and I found ourselves without life jackets. The flames engulfed the amidships and the ship was going down by the stern. Hugh McLeod found us confused and disorientated. He gave his Mae West to Bernie and somehow found one for me. The flames on the water drifted away from Mac and me as we stepped off the fantail the ship. She was going down fast. Mac and I paddled away from her. I looked for Bernie to no avail. I did not see him again until 1982 when I met him in Sutherlin, Oregon.

We floated around for quite some time. Mac was a good swimmer. I remember vividly the shrapnel hitting the water, making a hissing sound.

A liberty ship loaded with high explosives and gasoline, as we learned from crewmen who yelled at us, cut down a large crew type life raft. We climbed aboard and laid down on it. All the while the whole sky was ablaze with anti-aircraft fire and searchlights. After climbing on the raft, I almost fainted. My hands were raw from the burns. I flopped on my belly and eased the pain by putting my hands in the water.

I judge we were aboard the raft till daylight. A small boat from the *USS Delta* found us. While on the small boat, I suffered with my burns. I found an oily bucket to put my hands in, got a shot of morphine and went aboard the *Delta*. Later we were sent to a Navy hospital in Bizerte for a couple of days and then headed out for the States, first on an LST to Oran and then on the *US Florence Nightingale* to New York.

I'm now 86 years old and have had a good life. I married late in life and have had a good wife but no children. I worked the electrician's trade for 45 years (I had enough of diesels during the time I was in the Navy.) I had some pleasant experiences while in the Navy and some not so pleasant. Such is life! No regrets!

FREE ENROLLMENT IN WASHINGTON DC NAVY MEMORIAL LOG NOW OFFERED

We are indebted to David Michael, Woodbridge, VA, for passing on this information:

If you have visited the United States Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C., you know that they have, for some time, maintained a log where former Navy personnel could enter their individual records for a fee. Now, they are offering FREE enrollment.

For details, see their website at www.navymemorial.org



ADMIRAL JOHN H. MORRILL'S FINAL RESTING PLACE LOCATED



Admiral Morrill's gravestone

The final resting place of the famed leader of LCI Flotilla 13, the “Black Cats” has been located by Byron Champlin, LCI 727, in the Cornish Flats, New Hampshire, cemetery. Placed in the Morrill family plot, the simple marker notes his service during World War II and the Korean Conflict. It also notes the two high decorations that Admiral received.

At the beginning of World War II, Admiral Morrill was a Lieutenant Commander commanding a small minesweeper at Corregidor. As the Japanese conquest of that battered stronghold drew to a close, he led a group of his men and made a daring escape in a whaleboat all the way to Australia. This feat was recounted in fiction form in the novel *The Last Lieutenant*. Upon reporting to BuPers for reassignment, he shocked his regular Navy detailer by requesting command of a flotilla of LCIs instead of a much more prestigious assignment aboard a battleship. Admiral Morrill recalls the scene in the opening pages of *The Cincinnati*, his account of his World War II service.

“Austin [the detailer] was horrified that I had asked for such duty. Then he added, ‘It would be a dead end for you, John, no promotion for you, only trouble.’ He went on talking, ‘I should remind you that almost all of your crews will be Reserves, Draftees and Volunteers. The officers do not respond well to discipline. They seem to believe it is something they have to put up with in order to please us Regulars. As for the men, you’ll be lucky if you can even get them to stand at attention or say Sir to you. I don’t think you can do much with that kind of people’ ”.

Despite this rather negative description of the men of the amphibious forces, Morrill insisted on the command and became perhaps one of the best-known spokesmen for Reservists in general and LCIers in particular. The battle record and combat efficiency of the “Black Cats” which has been reported on in past issues of *Elsie Item*, more than justified his trust in Reservists.



THE BANQUET—HIGHLIGHT OF THE NORFOLK REUNION!



The “Strolling Strings” entertained us with beautiful music throughout the evening.



Gordon and Sharon Smith



Hal Bleyhl and daughter Marlyn



Roy and Jean Agee



Connie and Hanna Mulherin



John Cumber welcomes Admiral Hall



The Color Guard were superb!

Your Officers and Board of Directors



Left to Right: Connie Mulherin, David Cox, John Cummer, Rod Scurlock, “Tiny” Clarkson, Gordon Smith, Hal Bleyhl (Not shown: Roy Age, Jim Talbert, Jim Aydelotte)

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2006 LCI Calendar Now Ready!

The emphasis in the 2006 calendar is on the first LCI gunboats converted in the fall of 1943 to stop the barge traffic moving troops and supplies into and out of the various Solomon Islands. The main armament of these Flotilla 5 LCIs was a 3"/50 gun mounted over the well deck. A discussion of the gunboat activities is on the inside back cover and there are photos of three of the ships. One shows the LCI(G) 22 right after the conversion on its shakedown out of Noumea, New Caledonia; another shows a portion of LCI(G) 23 which gives a good view of the #50. The last shows a hole from a torpedo that bounced into the side of LCI(G) 70.



Other photos show the long walk to the beach the 31st Division troops made at Morotai, laying smoke in Lingayan Gulf, the 744 landing ANZAC troops, the 472 coming alongside a battleship for fuel and water, the 713 on her way to her permanent berth at the Amphibious Memorial Museum, the 416 sunk on Omaha Beach, the Balikpapan Landing, the Cape Sansapor Landing, and the 1091 on her way to San Diego for the 1995 national reunion. The back cover shows Flotilla 10 ships on their way to Normandy. This calendar continues to depict historical information about LCI action in World War II.

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