



# "THE ELSIE ITEM"

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

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

JULY 2010

ISSUE #72

## ...AND THE ROCKET'S RED GLARE!



*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. Affiliate 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, preferably by email (cummerj@bellsouth.net) or by regular mail to 302 Pinewood Cottage Lane, Blythewood, SC, 29016*

# **NOW HEAR THIS!**

## **YOUR DUES ARE DUE!**

If you have not yet done so, please send your dues payment - \$25 - to  
USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc,  
101Rice Bent Way, #6, Columbia, SC 29229.

Life members: Again we'd like to urge you to make a tax-deductible contribution equal to your dues. Larger contributions cheerfully accepted!

## **NOMINATIONS FOR PRESIDENT/VICE PRESIDENT**

Anyone out there like to try for a great job with no pay except the gratitude, support and good wishes of your shipmates? According to our by-laws it's a bit late but we'll bend the rules a bit if someone wants to put their name - or someone else's name in nomination. President John Cummer and Vice President John France have agreed to stand for re-election

## **BY-LAWS AMENDMENT CONCERNING MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS**

An amendment to the LCI National Association by-laws will be voted on at the upcoming reunion in Cincinnati. It is proposed to open full membership to present affiliates and any other person interested in preserving the history of LCIs. Presented at the Portland reunion last year, the amendment has been framed to promote the continued existence of the Association and to give opportunity for younger persons to assume leadership as our WWII LCI members grow older.

Our present by-laws state that 75% of the membership must be WWII veterans. The membership requirement was originally drafted so that the Association could be eligible for tax-exempt status as a veteran's organization. Before implementation of the proposed amendment, legal counsel will be sought to determine if it will be necessary to change our status to that of a charitable organization, commonly known as a "501.C.3" organization.

If you will not be able to be in Cincinnati for the reunion you are urged to give your opinion on this proposed change to one of the officers or directors as listed on page 31.



# From the Editor/President

Where have we been? Where are we going?

There's nothing like advancing years to get one thinking about one's life. What have I done with it? What would I like to do with it before "shuffling off this mortal coil" as Shakespeare put it.

Something about preparing this 72nd edition of our newsletter and the 66th anniversary of D-Day has led me to thinking about those questions. And I'm certain that there are many of you who will be reading this that are doing the same.



Memory and anticipation—those are the two pins on which we hang much of our thinking. This newsletter has been dedicated to share and to stimulate memories. Most of us probably do pretty well in the memory business. How are we doing with anticipation?

It seems as though we are being constantly reminded that our generation is passing on at the rate of better than a thousand per day. That being so, it makes us anticipate more and more the joy of greeting our shipmates on the far shore. Our faith teaches us that there will be a lot more for us to be joyful about, but seeing those guys with whom we shared so much will be great.

But do we have anticipations about our lives for however many years we have here on earth before we join those shipmates? Age has taken its toll on many of us, so we may have to raise our sights a bit to get happy about what's to come. I hope we can do that.

Finishing well. That's a great objective/anticipation. We need to keep on doing as much as we can for ourselves while we are grateful for family and friends who help us to deal with our aches and pains. We have the opportunity of setting examples that can help our children, grand children and other loved ones who are still facing some of the situations that we struggled with in our youth.

Perhaps the most important example we can set is how we deal with life's ultimate questions; with our own mortality. I came upon this quote from an early Church father with the interesting name of Saint Isaac the Syrian. He said:

"Prepare your heart for your departure. If you are wise, you will expect it every hour."  
It's the old Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared!

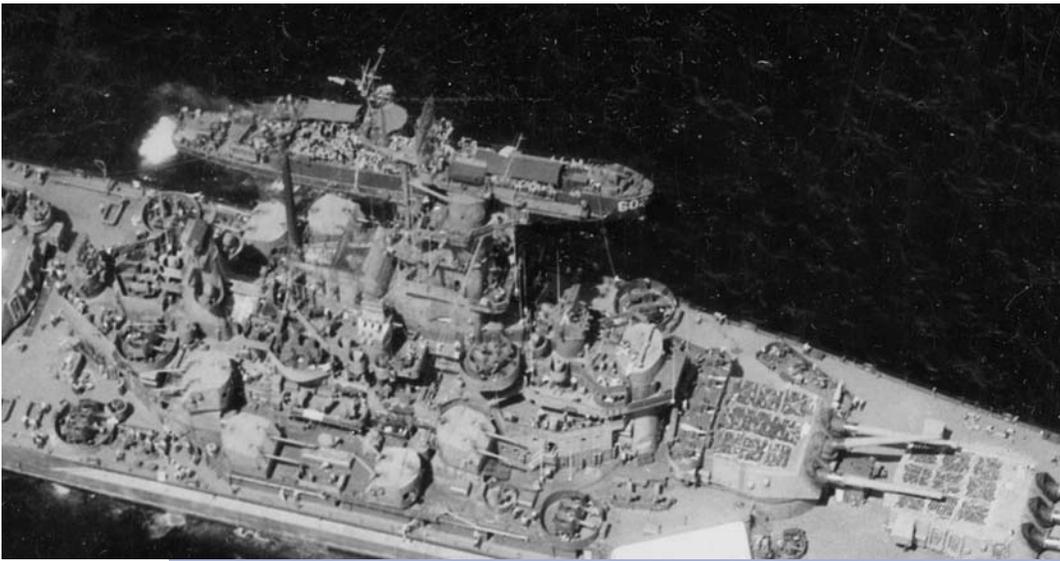
William Cullen Bryant put it this way:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan which moves  
To that mysterious realm where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged by his dungeon; but, sustain'd and soothed  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Let's finish well, Shipmates!

*-John Cummer*



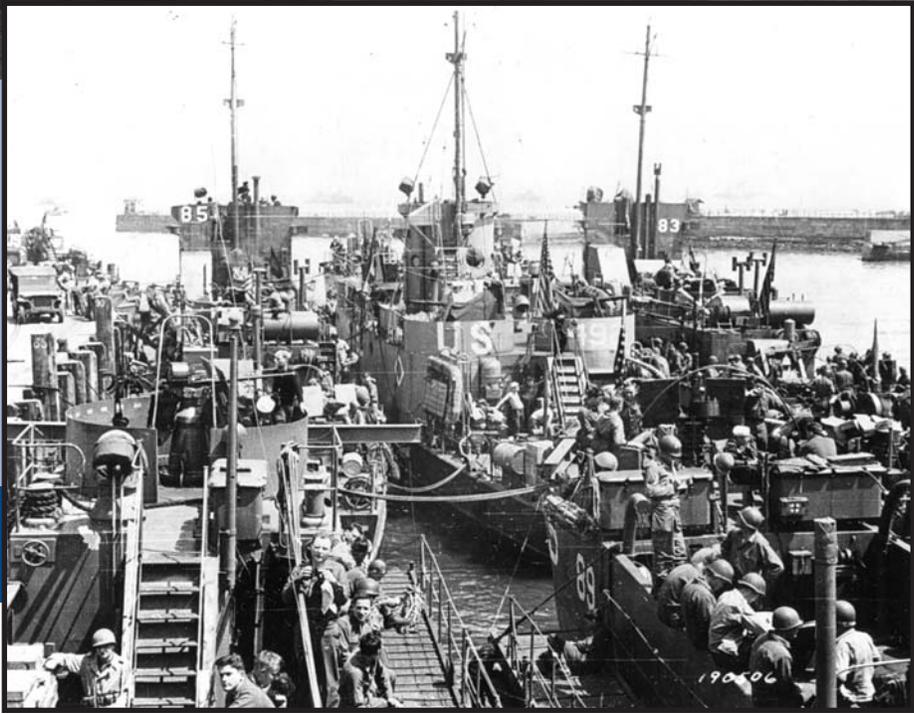


***“David and Goliath!”  
LCI(L) 602 comes  
alongside BB USS  
South Dakota  
(Ulithi Atoll,  
February 8, 1945)***



***LCI(L)s 651, 707,  
708, 1030, 772, and  
771 at Maui,  
rehearsing for the  
Iwo Jima landings***

***LCIs 83, 85, 89, and 442 load  
for the Normandy landings***



# LAST CALL FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS!

**MILLENNIUM HOTEL CINCINNATI – CINCINNATI, OH**  
**(800) 876-2100 (513) 352-2100**

The Millennium Hotel Cincinnati is located at 150 West Fifth St., Cincinnati, OH 45202. The Hotel is located in a prime downtown location, across the street and connected to the Cincinnati Convention Center. The hotel is within walking distance to the Paul Brown Stadium, Great American Ball Park, and the US Bank Arena. The hotel is just 12 miles from the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati Airport. Contact the hotel for accurate driving directions.

The Millennium Hotel Cincinnati has 872 newly renovated guestrooms and suites. Handicapped rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservations. Each room features in-room temperature control, color TV with cable channels, coffee maker, hair dryer, radio alarm clock, iron and ironing board. Guest may also enjoy access to the outdoor pool, sundeck (seasonal), and 24-hour fitness center. Parking at the hotel for registered guests will be \$11 per day. Check-in is at 4:00pm and check-out is at 12 noon.

**The Bistro on Elm Restaurant and Bar** serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Vivid color and contemporary furnishings create a relaxed atmosphere to savor the restaurant's American Cuisine. Room service is also available.

Transportation from the airport is provided by Executive Transportation. Current rates are as follows and are subject to change: One way is \$20 per person; Round trip is \$30. Call (800) 990-8841 or (513) 352-2135 prior to your arrival or departure to reserve your transportation. Same-day reservations can also be accommodated.

The Millennium Hotel Cincinnati does not have parking for guests staying at the hotel with RV's. Should hookups be required, please call Hidden Valley RV Park at (513) 733-5330. The park is located at 9797 Reading Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45215, which is approximately 14 miles away from the hotel. Call the park for information, directions, and reservations.

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

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

-----CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL -----

**USS LSM-LSMR ASSOCIATION & USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION REUNION – HOTEL RESERVATIONS**  
**REUNION: AUGUST 25-29, 2010**

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

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

TEL. NUMBER ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ # OF ROOMS NEEDED \_\_\_\_\_ # OF PEOPLE IN ROOM \_\_\_\_\_ HANDICAP ACCESS  
\_\_\_\_\_ KING BED \_\_\_\_\_ 2 DOUBLE BEDS

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

**RATE:** \$109 + tax (currently 17%) Rate will be offered 3 days before and after reunion dates, based on availability.

**CUT OFF DATE:** 07/22/10. Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Deposit is refundable if reservation is cancelled 72 hours prior to your date of arrival.

All reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit, enclosed.

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

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

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

**MAIL TO: MILLENNIUM HOTEL CINCINNATI, 150 WEST FIFTH ST., CINCINNATI, OH 45202**  
**ATTN: RESERVATIONS**

# REUNION SCHEDULE

**JOINT REUNION  
USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
&  
USS LSM LSMR ASSOCIATION  
AUGUST 25-29, 2010  
MILLENNIUM HOTEL - CINCINNATI, OHIO**

**Wednesday, August 25**

- 1:00pm - 7:00pm **Reunion Registration open**  
1:00pm - Hospitality Room opens for the duration of the reunion.  
7:30pm - 10:30pm Reception in the Hospitality Room

**Thursday, August 26**

- 7:30am - 8:30am **Reunion Registration open**  
9:00am - 12:00pm CITY TOUR (description follows)  
9:30am - 3:30pm WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB MUSEUM (description follows)  
2:00pm - 5:00pm **Reunion Registration open**  
5:45pm - 10:45pm DINNER CRUISE (description follows)

**Friday, August 27**

- 9:00am - 10:00am **Reunion Registration open**  
9:30am - 10:30am LCI Affiliates Meeting  
11:30am - 4:30pm RIVER DOWNS RACE TRACK (description follows)  
3:00pm - 5:00pm **Reunion Registration open.** Additional hours will be posted at the reunion if necessary.

**Saturday, August 28**

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

**Sunday, August 29**

- 8:00am - 8:45am Non-denominational church service  
Farewells & Departures

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



# TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

## CITY TOUR

Thursday, August 26

Board bus for a guided tour of the "City of Seven Hills," and learn the history of this river city. Drive by the Taft Museum, Riverfront Stadium, and more. See the diverse downtown architecture of Fountain Square and the Procter & Gamble Headquarters. Continue through Eden Park and Mt. Adams, from which you are offered great views of the city's skyline. Drive by the Krohn Conservatory, one of one of the largest public greenhouses in the country.

**9:00am board bus, 12:00pm back at hotel**

**\$37/Person includes bus and guide.**

**\*\* OR\*\***

## WRIGHT PATTERSON / U.S. AIR FORCE MUSEUM

Thursday, August 26

Board bus for Dayton and the United States Air Force Museum, "where the eagles rest." This museum is adjacent to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and is the oldest and largest military aviation museum in the world. Exhibits, including approximately 200 aircraft and missiles, tell the story of aviation development from the days of the Wright brothers to the Space Age. You may visit the President's Hangar, which houses fifty planes, some of which were former Presidential Aircraft. (Your guide will escort interested parties to this hangar immediately upon arrival.) Lunch will be on your own at the cafeteria upstairs. For a nominal fee, enjoy the featured IMAX presentation.

**9:30am board bus, 3:30pm back at hotel**

**\$49/Person includes bus and escort. Lunch on your own.**

## DINNER CRUISE

Thursday, August 26

BB Riverboats has been a staple of the beautiful Cincinnati riverfront for the past 25 years. Climb aboard either the *Belle of Cincinnati*, *Mark Twain*, or *River Queen* to experience one of the Queen City's most unique attractions for a three-hour dinner cruise. Enjoy the illuminated Cincinnati skyline in one of the steam-powered vessels that are significant characters in the city's storied past. Take in all of the sights of the Ohio River from a perspective you won't see on foot or by car while enjoying a great buffet with two entrees and all of the trimmings. Entertainment will also be provided.

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

**\$84/Person includes bus, escort, and dinner cruise.**

## RIVER DOWNS RACE TRACK

Friday, August 27

Enjoy a day at the Races! Since 1925, River Downs Race Track has specialized in live thoroughbred horse racing and has catered to groups of all sizes. The thrill of the bet, the race, and the win coupled with the scenic beauty of one of America's most beautiful race courses makes the River Downs experience one to remember. Before post-time, enjoy a hot lunch buffet with two entrees. Lunch and race-watching will take place from air-conditioned comfort, so come enjoy the day. Note: This trip requires a minimum of 40 people.

**11:30am board bus, 4:30pm back at hotel**

**\$58/Person includes bus, escort, lunch, reserved indoor seating, and program.**

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

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

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



## USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at [www.afr-reg.com/lcilsn](http://www.afr-reg.com/lcilsn). All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before July 22, 2010. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

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

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

<b>CUT-OFF DATE IS 7/22/10</b>	<b>Price Per</b>	<b># of People</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b><u>TOURS</u></b>			
<i>Please choose one of the following two tours:</i>			
THURSDAY: CITY TOUR	\$37		\$
THURSDAY: WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB MUSEUM	\$49		\$
THURSDAY: DINNER CRUISE	\$84		\$
FRIDAY: RIVER DOWNS RACE TRACK	\$58		\$
<b><u>MEALS</u></b>			
SATURDAY: BREAKFAST BUFFET	\$10		\$
SATURDAY: BANQUET <i>(Please select your entrée)</i>			
ROASTED PRIME RIB OF BEEF	\$36		\$
CHICKEN PICCATA	\$36		\$
SALMON	\$36		\$
<b><u>MANDATORY PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE</u></b>			
Includes Hospitality Room and administrative expenses.	\$20		\$
<b>Total Amount Payable to <u>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</u></b>			<b>\$</b>

PLEASE PRINT AS YOU WANT YOUR NAMETAG TO READ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# LCI Painting Donated to the National Museum of the Pacific War

A Report from Joseph Ortiz,  
Nephew of Gilbert V. Ortiz, USS LCI(G) 70



*Left to Right: Mike Lebens, Curator of Collections, National Museum of the Pacific; Leo D. Wilcox (USS LCI(G) 70); Joseph Ortiz*

December 7, 2009, turned out to be a cool damp day, but that did not stop thousands who came for the ribbon cutting by former **President George H. W. Bush** to the newly expanded National Museum of the Pacific War in the beautiful small town of Fredericksburg, Texas.

I was there for two reasons, to visit the museum, and to donate my painting that was recently published in *The Elsie Item* #68. After completing the painting in honor of my Uncle **Gilbert V. Ortiz**, who served on the LCI (G) 70, I contacted the museum to tell them about the story of Uncle Gilbert and “The Unsinkable 70.” I was later contacted by the museum’s art curator who inquired of the possibility of obtaining the painting for the museums collection. All I could think of at that moment was “what a great honor for me,” and “what a perfect place for the painting to be.” I then notified my Father, who is also an artist and who inspired me. I also contacted Uncle Gilbert, and two men who also served on the 70, **Mr. Leo Wilcox**, and **Mr. Royal Wetzel**. They all provided valuable information for the creation of the painting, and I will always be grateful to them.



Mr. Leo Wilcox contacted me prior to the ceremony informing me that he also was planning to attend. This event was becoming more exciting as the days drew near. So it was that on Dec. 7, 2009, after the ribbon cutting, Mr. Wilcox, and I were able to meet in person for the first time. Later that evening the Ortiz, and Wilcox families got together at the hotel and had a nice visit.

The next day we gathered once again at the museum for the donation of the painting. It was an honor for me, and an honor to have Mr. Wilcox present for the dedication of "The Unsinkable 70" to The National Museum of the Pacific War. There the painting will be able to forever tell one of many stories of the LCIs and of the brave men who served aboard them.

I am currently working on a painting of the Avenger that President George H. W. Bush was flying when he was shot down. In order for it to be accurate, I needed to know some details for the painting. I took a chance and wrote to him, asking for information. To my surprise he replied with this letter:



GEORGE BUSH

**August 28, 2009**

**Dear Joseph,**

**It pleases me that you are working on a painting of the Avenger I was flying when I was shot down over Chi Chi Jima back in 1944.**

**On that fateful day, I was, indeed, flying aircraft No. 3 because No. 2 was not airworthy. Shortly after I started my 30-degree dive towards the target, the engine was hit. The left wing where the wing folds burst into flames and smoke filled the cockpit, but I was able to release my bomb load on the target. The enemy anti-aircraft fire was very intense, and there were black explosions all around me.**

**My canopy was open during the dive bombing run. I do not recall seeing any tracer rounds coming at me.**

**I hope this information is helpful. Thank you so much for writing.**

**Sincerely and with warm best wishes,**

**Mr. Joseph Ortiz  
1702 W. Jackson  
Pecos, TX 79772**



# **Life Aboard a Flotilla Flagship OR It ain't quite exactly what you thought!**

**By  
George Weber, LCI(FF) 370**

There were a few advantages of being on the staff of the Flotilla Commander, as I was. We had a certain prestige, which often facilitated harbor red tape, and sometimes were in safer locations during invasions. However, our existence on board LCI(FF) 370 made the small vessel very crowded.

What had been a rather commodious mess and library space for the ship's crew on the main deck just forward of the galley had been partitioned off into tiny staterooms for the staff officers. And what had been the below decks sleeping quarters for the ship's crew had been partly cleared of bunks, with tables and benches installed for use as our mess space. Additional bunk removal provided space for two banks of automobile batteries—24 in each bank—to provide power for the many additional radios, etc. needed for staff use.

At the same time, we had nearly twice the normal number of enlisted men who needed to sleep in that compartment! So the remaining bunks were removed and re-installed in four-high tiers. This put the bunks very close together, vertically. You could not raise your knees in turning over without jabbing the sailor above you, and you got jabbed by the guy below you. Hefty crew members had difficulty getting in and out of their bunks.

One bank of the batteries would be in use while the other bank was being recharged. This charging filled the compartment with sulfuric acid fumes. These fumes were added to the other accumulated odors filling the crowded compartment: foods, rank body odors (no showers, other than saltwater ones), and the flatulence produced by the traditional naval Wednesday and Saturday breakfasts of baked beans, cornbread and coffee. The ventilation system—never outstanding—was sorely inadequate for handling this combination of smells.

Having to carry your loaded tray down the steep ladder to the mess space was a problem. LCIs, with their very shallow drafts and flat bottoms, did not pitch and roll at a "regular" rate as do larger vessels with deeper drafts and keels. Sailors aboard these more commodious and well-behaved ships can anticipate the ship's movements fairly well. But LCIs seem to just jounce about erratically on the ocean's surface. So, with one hand needed to hold the food tray, you had only the other hand to try to steady yourself as you descended the ladder. Often this did not provide sufficient steadying to avoid spilling some of your food, the coffee mug or the cereal/soup bowl.

One morning we were being served bowls of steaming hot oatmeal. I was negotiating the perilous trip down the ladder. Just as I was starting down, bracing myself against some side-to-side motions the ship was making, the ship suddenly took a forward pitch. This threw me off balance and, as I was quickly moving my free hand to hold on the ladder behind me, I gave my food tray an upward toss. This reflex action propelled my coffee mug and cereal bowl into the air. The oatmeal had formed a "skin" where it contacted the cold bowl, so it left the bowl as a free-flying entity.



This oatmeal blob landed with a clinging, painful splat on the bare back of a shipmate seated at one of the tables. This startling and painful development caused that shipmate, who was holding a hot cup of coffee at face level in order to blow on it to cool it down, to jump. This action caused him to dash hot coffee into the face of a friend seated across the table from him. This poor guy jumped up in pain, causing him to bang his head savagely against the bottom of a metal library shelf just above him.

This all happened quickly and resembled a well-planned Hollywood comedy slapstick routine. But no one was in a laughing mood at the time. I was sorry and contrite. Someone scraped the oatmeal from the first guy's back, which left a blister, and the other guy had a painful "goose egg" atop his head. Although, in their pain, they voiced anger at me, it did not come to blows. Eventually, it struck people as humorous—at least to the onlookers.

Carrying food trays down that ladder caused many food and liquid spills, but none quite as spectacular as the one involving my airborne hot oatmeal!

So much for the good life aboard a flagship!

## **HELP EDIT THIS NEWSLETTER!**

If you have any writing or editorial skills that you would like to use we'd love to have you join us in keeping *Elsie Item* going. What we need is someone who could review and edit submissions. Maybe even doing a bit of writing yourself! With the internet there's no concern about where you may be located.

Associates especially—here's a chance to be of real service to our Association.  
Old timers? You bet!

I'd love to hear from you. Email [cummerj@bellsouth.net](mailto:cummerj@bellsouth.net).  
Home phone 803-714-9098. Cell 803-381-4779



# The Invasion of Sicily

By  
Elmer Carmichael, LCI 85

On July 9th and 20, 1943, the worst storm of the twentieth century struck the Mediterranean Sea and on the very same days the Allied Forces landed 160,000 troops on the southern shores of Sicily with a convoy of 3,000 ships. Our U.S. Coast Guard flotilla of 24 LCIs left North Africa with some 5,000 combat infantrymen aboard. As soon as we left port nearly every soldier became very sea sick because we had to take a course to Sicily that made our ships roll instead of pitching.

As we neared Licata, Sicily, a very sea-sick soldier, who was getting ready to go down the starboard ramp, said to me, "Sailor, just get me off this SOB, and I will guarantee you that they will never get me on one of these things again even if I have to spend the rest of my life in Europe!"

Sicily was conquered in 38 days and our ships spent that entire time shuttling more troops from North Africa into Sicily. There are two things that I especially remember.

On one of our trips, we picked up 200 native men dressed in long robes and carrying large curved knives in their sashes. They looked like Punjab of the old *Little Orphan Annie* comics. They had French Foreign Legionaire officers in charge. I learned many years later that these were famous night fighters from Pakistan called *gurkas* and their long curved knives were called *kukris*. I was told they used these knives to behead their enemies. What I do know is that they did not use the heads in their compartments, so we had to hose down the decks after we left them in Sicily. Scuttlebutt had it that they got paid by the number of German ears that they collected in the red bags that they had on their waists. These Gurka tribesmen fought with Field Marshall Montgomery's Eighth Army against Rommel's Afrika Korps. The German troops were frightened of the men as they would slip up on them and slit their throats. The Gurkas would touch the steel helmet and, if it was rough, they would kill the guard, but, if the helmet was smooth, they would assume that it was an Allied soldier.

The other thing I remember is that we loaded with troops and were to hit the beach behind Palermo, the capital city of Sicily. However, when we arrived we learned that General Patton's U.S. soldiers had conquered the city, so we sailed right into the harbor and tied up at the docks. Our troops marched off the ships without even getting their feet wet.

The English and American troops planned on trapping all German troops in the northeast corner of Sicily, but the Germans evacuated some 10,000 troops across the Messina Straights into Italy to fight against the Allies there. Montgomery's army was blamed for being too cautious in waiting to build up their supplies, but "Old Blood and Guts" Patton had his army well ahead of schedule with his lightning like tank movements.



# LCIer Elmer Carmichael Receives Thanks from “Unknown” Soldier

*Thanks to Elmer Carmichael for this story of a most unusual “thanks.” Elmer writes:*

Just recently I received the attached letter from a soldier who was on our ship. I do not know where he lives and I could not read the postmark; however, it did give me a warm feeling to know that this person gives us credit for his survival.

I wondered how he got my name and address and decided that it must have been that he saw my helmet, pictures, etc. at the D-Day Museum in New Orleans. The museum does show that these items were donated by Elmer Carmichael of Crescent, OK, and the local post office knew where I lived and put this letter in my mail box.

*Dear Mr. Elmer Carmichael,*

*You do not know me and I would like to remain anonymous. I was ordered militarily to be a passenger on LCI(L) 85. Boy, was I scared and nervous! I felt about a million different emotions flowing through my mind all at once. Man, did I pray that all would end well.*

*Well, it did. Not all was well, but I survived. Later on one of my buddies told me I was saved by you and your crewmates. I will not go into the extent of my injuries, only say that I have had a wonderful life since that day. I have had many successes and some failures which I learned from. My family tree has blossomed. Many great children have been born due to my survival and you and your crewmates tireless and heroic efforts. God has blessed me and I thank you.*

*Sincerely,*

*A Survivor of D-Day*

## WELCOME ABOARD! NEW MEMBERS

***Regular Member***

**DONALD WEST**

LCI 690

***Regular Member***

**DON H. EXTER**

LCI (R) 767

***Regular Member***

**WILLIAM HAWK**

LCI (R) 225

***Associate Member***

**VALERIE VIERK**

Father **HERBERT E. NOLDA** served on  
LCI 91 and 92

***Associate Member***

**JERRY A. HAWK, SR.**

Father **WILLIAM L. HAWK, SR.** served on  
LCI (R) 225 *(also joined as a regular member)*

***Associate Member***

**DON BURNES**

Father is **HEARLD W. BURNES**, LCI 596



# LCIs Participate in Search and Rescue of Survivors of “Taffy 3” Ships

*One of the most courageous feats in the history of the United States Navy took place in October, 1944, when a few small escort carriers and destroyers took on some of the most powerful ships in the Japanese Navy.*

*The landings on Leyte had been made when **Admiral “Bull” Halsey**, thinking he had the opportunity to engage and destroy aircraft carriers, sped off in search of the carriers leaving the invasion fleet almost totally undefended. Unbeknownst to him, a powerful force of Japanese ships, led by the super-battleship YAMATO was bearing down on the invasion beaches and disaster was imminent. The only defense was three groups of small escort carriers, destroyers and destroyer escorts known as Taffies 1, 2 and 3.*

*Taffy 3 (six escort carriers, three destroyers and four destroyer escorts), was immediately in the path of monster Yamamoto, three other battleships, six cruisers, and two squadrons of destroyers. When they met it was a genuine “David and Goliath” battle.*

*The small ships attacked with such ferocity that the Japanese Admiral—thinking that such audacious attacks could only mean that a much larger force was near—broke off his attack and retreated. Disaster to the Leyte invasion was avoided but not without cost. In addition to the many sailors who gave their lives in the furious attack, there were hundreds of survivors of sunken escort carriers and destroyers in the water.*

*Following the battle Off Samar on 25 October 1944, a task force was organized for the purpose of search and rescue of survivors of the American ships that were sunk.*

*The details given here of the search and rescue are taken from the pages of the book, **MACARTHUR’S AMPHIBIOUS NAVY**, written by **Admiral Daniel E. Barbey**.*

Admiral Barbey writes:

*“At 1500 on the day of the battle, **Captain Charles Adair** showed me an intercepted dispatch from a plane which reported groups of men hanging to rafts and debris in the waters off Samar. Apparently no ships were in the area. Adair proposed we organize a rescue group of our amphibious craft and suggested LCIs would be particularly suitable because of their bow ramps.*

*“A priority dispatch was immediately sent to Commander Seventh Fleet (**Admiral Kincaid**) requesting approval of our rescue mission. Adair assembled two PCs and five LCIs. Medical personnel and supplies were sent aboard. In an hour they were formed into a task group and ready to depart for the rescue area about 125 miles away. (**Lieutenant Commander James A. Baxter**, U.S. Naval Reserve was the commanding officer of PC 623).*

*“No reply to our dispatch to Commander Seventh Fleet having been received by 1600, a second dispatch was sent off urging immediate approval and Captain Tarbuck was sent by boat to the Seventh Fleet flagship, the **WASATCH**, about a mile away to get action.*

*“An hour later the rescue plan was approved and Baxter’s small task force was underway. They will always be gratefully remembered by the more than eleven hundred survivors they picked up. Extracts from the logs of all but one of these ships are used to tell the story. Unfortunately, the log of LCI 34 could not be found in the archives.”*



Here are the excerpts from the logs as cited by Admiral Barbey”

**25 October 1944 (Wednesday)**

1600 PC 623 Task Group 78.12 formed, consisting of PC 623 (flagship), PC 1119, LCI 34, LCI 71, LCI 337, LCI 340 and LCI 341 to search for survivors.  
1806 PC 623 One medical officer, Lieutenant (jg) Lucas, and one PHM, 1c Wattengel, came aboard.

**26 October 1944 (Thursday)**

0400 PC 623 Task group proceeding to area to conduct search for naval survivors.  
0500 PC 623 LCI 340 and LCI 341 unable to make 10 knots and dropped back, best speed 9 knots.  
0621 LCI 341 Fanned out in line formation abreast with 1000 yard intervals between ships. Commenced search for survivors.  
0623 PC 623 Sunrise.  
0810 PC 623 Increased interval to 2000 yards, better visibility.  
0910 PC 623 Sighted several planes and ships. Unable to contact due to sun and distance. Have received no, repeat no, information relating to survivors.  
1049 LCI 71 Passed through oil slick.  
1400 LCI 341 Three friendly seaplanes passed abeam two miles.  
1445 LCI 71 Sighted airplane belly tank off port bow, distance 50 yards.  
1445 LCI 71 Sighted three unidentified aircraft dead ahead.  
1500 PC 623 Passed through heavy oil slick.  
1645 LCI 340 Sighted object in water. It appears to be a survivor.  
1659 PC 1119 Sighted 50-caliber ammo box; also 2 belly tanks and numerous boxes.  
1700 LCI 340 Picked up Japanese survivor. He was kept afloat by holding on to a wooden box. Survivor was stripped for firearms but none were found. All papers and valuables were taken in custody by the Commanding Officer. Survivor was then given medical attention, food, water, and placed under guard.  
1700 PC 623 Maneuvered to recover objects in water (Japanese).  
1716 LCI 341 All ships coming about to search area thoroughly.  
1812 LCI 341 General Quarters: Ack-ack off port bow.  
1820 LCI 341 Sunset. Darkened ship.  
1848 LCI 341 Secured from General Quarters.  
2127 LCI 337 Sighted much debris and heavy oil slick. Completed investigation of objects in water. No sign of life.  
2220 PC 623 Sighted red, white and green flares bearing 270 degrees T.  
2247 PC 623 Sighted several rafts of survivors from CVE 73.  
2300 LCI 337 Arrived in survivor area, cruised and maneuvered as necessary to pick up men in water.  
2335 PC 623 Lying to, to receive survivors.  
2335 LCI 340 Received radio message to proceed to vicinity of PC 623 to pick up American survivors.

**27 October 1944 (Friday)**

0025 PC 1119 Sighted 3 rafts containing U.S. Navy survivors.  
0030 LCI 71 Sighted first survivors and picked them up.  
0030 PC 1119 Commenced taking aboard U.S. Navy survivors.  
0033 LCI 341 Survivors sighted in water, stopped engines. Hoisted out small boat.





***Admiral Dan Barbey, known as "Amphibious Dan" wades ashore at Morotai. New Guinea with General Douglas MacArthur. (Note LCIs in the background)***

0055	LCI 337	Survivors sighted and rescued on starboard hand.
0058	LCI 341	First survivors aboard from GAMBIER BAY.
0115	LCI 71	Continued picking up survivors, a few at a time.
0121	LCI 341	Steaming at slow speeds, picking up survivors.
0122	LCI 340	Picked up lone survivor, American from CVE 73. He was given immediate medical attention, dry clothing, food and drink.
0142	LCI 337	Survivor aboard.
0156	LCI 340	Pulled seven life rafts that were tied together alongside and started taking survivors of CVE 73 aboard.
0215	LCI 337	Sighted floating life raft. Rescued group of survivors.
0235	LCI 341	Life raft alongside. Taking aboard survivors. Sixteen men.
0247	LCI 340	Completed taking on survivors from seven rafts. (Approximately 110 U.S. Navy survivors). Some of the survivors were badly wounded and were given all the medical attention that this ship was able to give.
0335	LCI 71	Picked up 144 men from several life rafts.



0345 PC 1119 Finished taking aboard 183 Navy survivors. Names, rank, serial number as per list forwarded to SOPA (Senior Officer Present Afloat).

0348 PC 623 Detached PC 1119 to return to San Pedro Bay (Leyte Gulf) as they had 200 survivors aboard, instructing them to make full report to CTF Commander Seventh Amphibious Force.

0415 LCI 341 Reported number of survivors on board at this time are 36, many of which have shrapnel injuries and suffering from exposure.

0622 LCI 340 Daylight came and we proceeded to continue the search for survivors.

0654 LCI 337 Four survivors sighted and rescued. One man apparently dead.

0745 LCI 337 Rescued approximately 58 survivors in a group from DD 533.

0800 PC 623 Standing by taking on survivors from DE 413.

0830 LCI 341 Life raft alongside, took aboard 36 men, survivors of USS Hoel.

0839 PC 623 Sighted more survivors from DD 533. Some were taken aboard.

0840 LCI 337 Maneuvering to pick up survivors.

0849 PC 623 Picking up survivors from DD 557.

0900 LCI 337 Rescued survivor from DD 557.

0904 LCI 341 Picked up life raft with 11 men aboard. Survivors of USS Johnston. Continued to pick up scattered survivors.

0905 LCI 337 Rescued 5 survivors from USS Johnston (DD 557).

0920 PC 623 Pumped 5,000 gallons of fuel overboard to lighten ship. PC 623 had aboard 260 survivors. The fuel was pumped overboard to compensate for the added weight of the survivors.

0925 LCI 71 Eight more survivors picked up.

0930 LCI 71 Underway with 175 survivors aboard.

0930 LCI 337 Large group of survivors aboard, approximately 85 men.

0930 LCI 340 Rescued 13 men from life raft in position: Lat. 12 degrees 06' 30" N. Long. 125 degrees 42" E. Men were given all the medical attention that this ship could render. Attempted to give all survivors dry clothing, bunks, warm food, and drink. A number of these men were badly injured and were from DD 557.

0936 LCI 341 Completed search. Total number reported aboard 90 men. Impossible to get complete list of names due to very crowded conditions and physical conditions of men. Fell into column formation, course 150 degrees T.

0945 LCI 337 Sounded General Quarters. Sighted one enemy plane off bow. Identified as "Betty" bomber.

0952 LCI 341 Enemy planes made run on ships, strafing, but doing no damage. Secured from General Quarters.

1130 LCI 341 Fell out of formation to investigate debris.

1140 LCI 341 Returned to formation.

1200 PC 623 Steaming as before on course 150 degrees T. Report was made that Capt. Viewig, Cdr. Thomas (DD 533), Lt. Comdr. R. Copeland (DE 413) had been picked up.

1806 PC 623 C/S to 9.2 knots. Count was made of survivors aboard inaccurate. 260 men and one dead.

1840 LCI 337 Along port side of USS DE 47. Doctor came aboard.

1955 LCI 341 C/C 309 degrees T. Standing into Leyte Gulf.

2000 LCI 340 Five officers from CVE 73 picked up: Lt. Comdr. J. A. Samders, USNR, Lt. W. Stringer, USNR, Lt. (J.g.) A.S. Young, Ens. L.L. Epping, USNR and Ens.



A.W. Betsang, USNR. Also 98 men from CVE 73 and 18 men from DD 557.  
List attached.

**28 October 1944 (Saturday)**

0150 LCI 71	Dropped anchor near hospital ship
0231 PC 623	Boats alongside for debarkation of survivors.
0345 LCI 71	Small boats began coming alongside to transfer survivors.
0350 LCI 341	Small boats alongside to transfer survivors to hospital ships.
0401 LCI 340	Transferred Japanese survivor to small boat with all his possessions for transportation to USS AGC 9.
0645 LCI 340	Started transferring American survivors to small boats for transportation to hospital ships for treatment. The hospital ships were <i>LST 266</i> and <i>LST 464</i> .
0850 LCI 337	LCM alongside to transfer wounded men to hospital ship, <i>LST 464</i> , a converted hospital ship. Stretcher cases only.
0942 LCI 71	Last of survivors transferred from Ship.

Admiral Barbey concludes with these words:

“The sequence of events recorded in the abbreviated style of ships’ logs gives no hint of the drama that must have prevailed in the rescue area. The survivors were in shark infested-waters, clinging to rafts and debris, some for periods of forty hours; some were wounded; all were chilled at night and under a torrid sun during the day, hoarding their Very signal lights, seeing planes overhead but themselves unseen.

“Through the daylight hours of 26 October, Baxter’s small task force searched the battle area without success. Current and wind had carried the survivors away. It was the Very signals, fired at night, that finally guided the task force in the proper direction and to rescue 1,153 men. It was an outstanding search and rescue operation which has received little recognition.

“The more than 1100 survivors of *GAMBIER BAY*, *HOEL*, *JOHNSTON* and *SAMUEL B. ROBERTS* will be forever grateful for the efforts put forth by this small RESCUE TASK GROUP, made up from ships of MacArthur’s Amphibious Navy and their diligent efforts to save as many of us as possible. Our thanks to TASK GROUP 78.12.

**May we have your attention, please:  
A Message from Gordon Smith:  
Order your LCI Association cap now!**

**Tiny Clarkson’s Ships Stores** may not be available at the next reunion.  
Hats are \$15.00 each plus 20% carton and postage. Send your order to:

**Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum**

P.O. box 17220,  
Portland, Oregon, 97217



# MY DAD, MY HERO.

## A Tribute from Steve Dudrow, Secretary, USS LCI National Association

My dad, **BM2C Jimmy Dudrow**, grew up in Hyattsville, Maryland the son of Otis Dudrow, an accountant and part owner of Dudrow's Drug Store in downtown Hyattsville. He was the only son and had four sisters that he adored through the years, **Christine** (born on Christmas Day), **Betty Jane** and the younger sisters **Anna** and **Otie**.

After turning 18 in November 1942, my dad a C&P Telephone Central Office Repairman found his way to the Navy recruiting station and eventually reported to Newport, RI, for training in January 1943. He was slated to be a guard on a merchant ship bound for Murmansk, but mumps broke out and the camp was quarantined. He mentioned more than once that may have saved his life.

In June 1943, he boarded the freshly built LCI(L) 358 at the George Lawley & Sons shipyard in Neponset, MA. This would be his home for two years as they trained at ATB, Solomons, MD, went through the Panama Canal, and traversed the Pacific to the Solomons Islands, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

My dad departed LCI(L) 358 in July 1945 to come home. He reminisced to me about that the flight to Hawaii. He said it was very long and they would land and gas up at islands no bigger than the runway.

Of course like all kids my age I asked, "How many Jap planes did you shoot down dad?" He would always reply "I don't know. I just shot where they told me to."

Many years later I was very lucky to talk with one of his shipmates, **Paul Moore**, who told me exactly the same thing, "I just shot where they told me to."

One of the few details my dad did tell me was that he was very excited to have been able to go into Rizal Stadium in Manila, because Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig had hit home runs there in 1934. Several shots of this stadium are in his collection of pictures he brought home.

My dad was assigned to the USS Oregon City (CA122) in September, 1945, and left the Navy to return to C&P Telephone in December of that year.

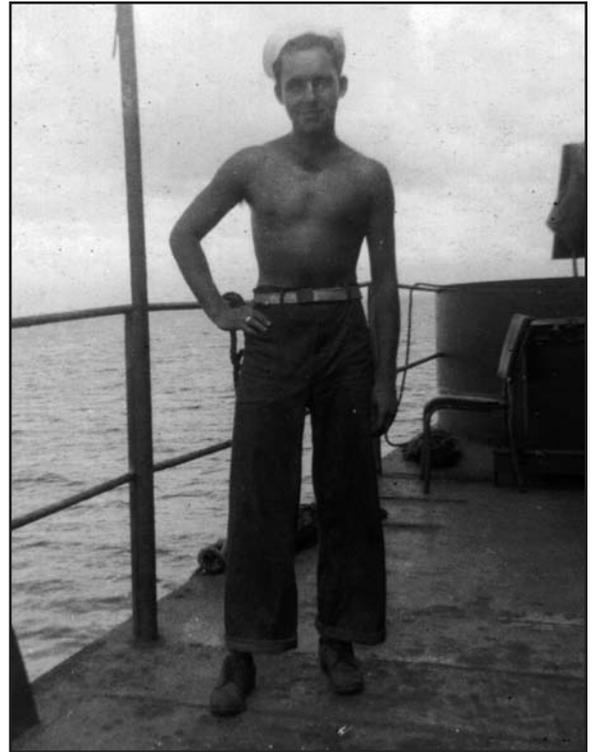
Dad was a good man and a great father. He taught me to be humble and heartfelt. He gave me the greatest gift of all—a work ethic.

Unfortunately my dad passed away in 1987 before the LCI Association formed. I was fortunate to meet **John Cummer** during the Solomon's "On Watch" dedication and he led me to meet **Gordon Smith** and the LCI 713 gang. I cannot even begin to describe my feelings the first time I saw the 713 from the I-5 Bridge.

I am proud to serve as secretary of the association, and I only hope I can give a little back to this fine group of men who went off as kids and saved the world we know today. My dad will always be my hero, and I am fortunate to be associated with his fellow LCI veterans—all good men and all heroes to me.

The pictures my dad snapped during his Pacific tour can be found at:

<http://gwenstevejtbrrian.us/LCI.htm>



**Jimmy Dudrow, BM2C  
USS LCI 358**



# My Quest for the 454

By Roger A. Gray

*Roger Grey was a leader in the effort to organize Affiliates until family responsibilities and other concerns made it necessary for him to step down. Shortly after linking up with the USS LCI National Association at our New Orleans reunion in 2004 he wrote this moving piece about his grandfather and how rewarding the search for more information about him has been.*

*In the hopes that this will inspire other sons, daughters and grandchildren of LCI Veterans to find out more about their relative, and record what they find for posterity, we re-print Roger's writing here.*

For years my family has wondered what happened to my granddad while he was in the Navy. For the rest of his life, after the War, he would wake up screaming, fall to the ground when a car backfired, or even try to dive off the roof of the house when a jet let off a sonic boom. I knew that he wasn't crazy. Something happened to him that he did not want to remember. So he kept quiet.

I knew of his Navy Cross. He told my dad and me the story one night while we were on a hunting trip. He didn't give much details or names. That was enough for him. It would never be enough for me. I always wanted to know more. I would try to get up my nerve to ask him, but I'd fail and bring up a different topic. I regret that. I always will.

In 1992, my granddad passed away. He had been fighting cancer for several years. I watched him fade away as the disease ate him up. He never cried. He never asked why. He just faced the inevitable head on. I always remember that in him. He was a brave man. Little did I know the depths of his bravery.

For many years after his death, I felt guilty. I felt that I had abandoned him in his hours of need. He had always been there for me. We were as close as close could be, when I was a kid. We were always fishing together, squirrel hunting, walking in the woods, or whatever; but we were together. I had removed myself from him when I found out about his illness. I did not know what to do or how to act around him. That was my reason for feeling such guilt.

All of my life, I have enjoyed reading. My granddad started to help me read when I was about four years old. I read the typical boyhood books, but the books that I enjoyed the most were the ones about World War II. To this day, I enjoy learning about the war.

I would always look through the pictures of the Pacific battles hoping to find one of my granddad. I would see images of the Marines at Iwo Jima, the silvery *Enola Gay*, and the burning hulk of the *Arizona*, all of the most common images from the war, but I would never find pictures of the kind of ship the he served upon.

As a kid, I built plastic models from time-to-time. I preferred WWII fighter planes, like the Corsair and the Hellcat. One year I received a model ship for my birthday. It was a strange ship from WWII called an LCI. I'd never heard of such a thing. It looked interesting. Somehow, this ship could run up into shallow water and let soldiers out onto the beach. I remember digging through the wrappings for the little card, to find out who had given me this interesting gift. When I saw that it had come from my granddad, I looked to him and smiled. He winked at me and smiled as he nodded his head. I will never forget that.

Since those days after he died, I've wondered more and more about him. I miss him, of course. That's normal. But I've felt that something was left out. A dark blot covered what I knew of his past. My curious nature has always made me feel like I needed to wipe that blot away. It's strange how we are given the drive long before we recognize it.



My mother gave me a package after returning from a trip to my grandmother's house in East Texas. My grandmother had given it to me to add to my collection of World War II books. She said that it would be good to put with my genealogy research, too. (I had been researching our families' history for a few years.) Inside the package, was a large, rolled up, photograph of my granddad's basic training class at their graduation, a large map of the Pacific with dates, locations, and a path between locations, which marked his trek through the Pacific, and—most interesting—was a Japanese deployment map that my granddad had found somewhere. This started me wondering more and more.

I took the dates and locations from the map and began researching. Some of them were invasions, like Saipan and Tinian. One of them marked where he arrived onboard his vessel, LCI(G) 454. Now I knew which vessel was his. Ground had been broken. I took the vessel's number and began searching for it on the internet. I learned a great deal about the LCIs and their roles in the war and grew to admire these men for their courage. I could see they operated under tremendous pressure. I also began to realize what may have happened to my granddad.

One day, I found a link to Navsource. Since I was on my lunch break, I tried just skimming through the pictures. I came across a section for the LCIs and selected the link for 454. I was amazed. There before me was all of the statistical data for the boat. There was a timeline of her actions. And there at the bottom of the page were three photos of the 454! The bottom picture showed the 454 moored in San Diego Bay with several other LCIs. The middle one showed her after she'd been converted to a transport from a gunboat.

But the topmost photo was the one that took hold of me as soon as I opened it. It showed the bow of the 454. In the gun tub, a man stood, looking back at the Conning Tower. I looked closely and recognized the silhouette of the man in the gun tub. I knew that my granddad had been the bow gunner. He had told that to my dad, years ago. Before I realized what was happening, I began to cry. I had found him. I had found his boat. A little bit of that mystery about my granddad was beginning to clear up.

At the bottom of the Navsource page there was a link to the LCI Association. Out of curiosity, I clicked it. After reading through the impressive site, I decided to leave a message in the guestbook, in hopes of finding someone from the 454. I gave a short synopsis of the tale that I'd been told of his actions that led to his receiving the Navy Cross. I knew it was a long shot—chances were that no one would answer.

A few days later, while getting ready to go to an awards banquet for my daughter's science fair, I got a phone call. At first, I thought it was a bill collector. I almost hung up. The man at the other end introduced himself as **Dennis Blocker**. The name sounded familiar, but I could not place it. He explained that his granddad had been on LCI (G) 449 and might have been in the same flotilla as LCI (G) 454. I immediately sat down on the floor.

As Dennis talked about the research that he'd done over the last few years, I became dumbstruck. Here was a kindred spirit. Here was a man who had been doing for several years what I had just started. We talked for close to an hour. As our visit concluded, Dennis invited me to a dinner in San Antonio where many veterans from his granddad's group would be.

On the way to my daughter's science fair dinner, an hour's drive away, many different feelings swam through my head. I was excited at the prospect of meeting everyone. I've always been nervous about meeting new people. And for this meeting, I was scared of what I might learn.

In San Antonio I hobbled to the front porch of the beautiful home that a friend of Dennis's had allowed us to use for the dinner. (I hobbled because I'd just had knee surgery and was walking with a cane). Dennis was there at the door to meet me. We shook hands, and I knew then that I'd met a kindred spirit. I showed him the maps and some photos that I'd brought. He was impressed with the map that my granddad had marked. He said it was like gold.



Dennis showed me around and introduced me to some of the veterans and their families. I met one of the captains who had been awarded the Medal of Honor at Iwo Jima. I also met several of the crew members' families who'd come to honor their fallen. Lastly, I met a man named **Bill Brinkley**. I had wanted to meet him since I had seen his name next to the image taken of my granddad in the bow of 454.

At first, I had felt like I was an outsider. My granddad wasn't a part of Group 8 as were all of these boats that we were talking about. I didn't know any of these people from Adam. But that changed. After talking with everyone for hours, viewing file footage of the boats at Iwo Jima, and listening to everyone's statements, I began to feel different about things. All of us there that night had cried, laughed, and frowned, together. We all felt the same feelings and shared them with each other. I felt as if I'd been adopted into a new family. I accepted that, because inside I felt that it was true.

I left thinking how honored I was to meet such a wonderful group of men and their families. Those men had been sent into Hell's gates and had come back. Those men had beaten the odds. Those men had fought, without flinching, for our freedom, and had won. Those men...were a lot like my granddad.

Now, a week later here in New Orleans, I've met more and more of veterans, and have heard their stories. I decided that they were and are the greatest generation. In time, they will be gone. Their stories and their memories will go with them if action is not taken.

I realize now, as I continue my search for the 454, my quest has been given more fuel. My goal now is to find and secure as much of the data on the 454 and her kin that I can. The men and their ships have never received the coverage that they deserve. I hope to change that one day. There are others, like Dennis Blocker, who have been researching and cataloging information. Together we will keep the dream alive.

As I move down the path of my self-appointed quest, I feel many things happening within me. I feel the ties of friendship sprout and grow stronger. I feel a stronger sense of self and of worth. I feel a sense of spirituality grow around the quest.

My quest for the 454 will never end. If it were to end, my quest for my granddad would be over. That will be a long time from now...and in another place, away from the action, the pain, and the sorrow. That's the place where we will all get to meet again. On a beautiful shore...uncluttered by war.



# AMERICA'S FIRST ENTRANCE INTO MALAKAL HARBOR, PALAU ISLANDS THROUGH THE EYES OF THE HELMSMAN

An excerpt from  
***LCI(L) 821: With Group 39, Flotilla 13, Palau Islands, 1945***  
by  
**Ronald L. Risch**  
**LCI (L) 821**

*The story of the renowned “Black Cat” Flotilla 13, commanded by then Captain, later **Rear Admiral, John H. Morrill** has been told in the pages of our newsletter and many other places. The courageous men of the flotilla performed strenuous and dangerous service in keeping Japanese soldiers from infiltrating into the southern Peleliu Islands. Admiral Morrill told their story himself in his book, THE CINCINNATI. Our own **Robert Heath** and **LeRoy Olson** added their personal account with their book WITH THE BLACK CAT USS LCI FLOTILLA 13. Now we share with you an incident from yet another publication, this time from LCler **Ronald L. Richard’s** 183 page account of his service aboard LCI(L) 821, Richard has taken the actual deck logs of his ship and incorporated his own comments and elaborations on many of the log entries. It is one of the most complete accounts of an LCI that we have seen.*

*In this account Ronald tells of how a sister ship, the 730, was the first United States warship to enter the former harbor of Malakal, a secret Japanese naval base. The account was written by Qm3C A, A. Mayer.*

*[For another glimpse of life aboard the 730, see **George Weber’s** story on page 10 of this issue]*

The LCI(G) was standing off the entrance of Malakal Harbor at about two thousand yards when the skipper said, “Let’s go. Left full rudder!” The ship swung slowly and so began the first American ship’s passage into the secret harbor of the Japanese stronghold in the Palau Islands. *[Note: there is variation in the spelling of the name of these islands - some have it Peliliu; in this account the spelling is Palau. Take your choice—same place!]*

As the ship’s head steadied down on course I could feel a certain tenseness in the atmosphere of the bridge. I guess everyone on the conn felt the same way, a bit keyed up and excited. In fact the air seemed electrically charged.

We moved in slowly, hugging the north side of the channel entrance with the steep cliffs of Malakal Island hovering over us. Yes, there were mines, plenty of them. The Japanese Naval Officer in charge of Malakal Harbor had come aboard from a Daihutsu and had given valuable information concerning these mines, but as to just where they were in the channel he was uncertain. The ship edged forward and rounded the tip of Ngarrol Island into the harbor. Through a fine driz-



zle of rain we had our first good view of the once-thriving secret harbor. The water was fortunately very calm and I managed to satisfy my curiosity with quick glances here and there while keeping an eye on the gyro repeater.

Malakal Harbor is a beautiful place surrounded by steep green hills affording ample protection from the heavy seasonal winds and seas of this area. The results of our carrier strikes had made it a graveyard of ships both large and small. Some were completely out of the water, but still resting on the bottom. Others were completely submerged. Occasionally a lone mast or two served as a warning that below lies a once proud man-of-war.

Suddenly **Captain Roberts** ordered, “Right full rudder,” indicating that we were quite near a sunken wreck. After all was clear dead ahead we began observing docks, emplacements and once proud warehouses. Moving as close to shore as safety would permit, we rounded a sharp turn marked by a half-destroyed concrete navigational beacon. Nothing but ruins could be observed on shore. Our Air Force had taken care that the Japanese had little or nothing that they would want to keep.

Out of the corner of his eye I could see **Commander Brown** and Captain Roberts talking. The next order, casually given, was also one of history for the 730. It was “Special Sea Detail”. Then through megaphones on the bridge came shouts to all the crew “Port side to”. That meant only one thing—we were going to dock. Our men had to jump to the dock immediately upon coming close in order to handle our own lines. They were probably the first Americans to set foot on Malakal Island.

With the ship secured all of us had to go ashore to see what it had to offer. *Elsie* and *Midnight*, our Flotilla and ship mascots, were bouncing through the grass before anyone else thought of leaving the ship. We observed ruined machinery, bomb pits, scattered debris and strafed oil drums. A few Japanese met us with profuse saluting and bowing. They wanted cigarettes; we wanted souvenirs. Both were eventually satisfied.

Our Ensign waved proudly from the mast, as did the Flotilla flag. All three absentee pennants were immediately blocked and Flotilla Thirteen had taken over Malakal. The Japanese were no longer in charge. America was the Victor!

The entrance of the Gunboat 730 into Malakal was the crowning climax to a whole year of sometimes dangerous and sometimes monotonous work of picket and patrol duty by LCI(L) Flotilla 13. Later, underway out of the harbor, it occurred to me that we and all the ships in the Palau area had added a sentence to the history of the Navy’s efforts to keep freedom and peace throughout the world and demonstrate power, peace and democracy upon the seas.



# Admiral John Morrill's Tribute to the "Black Cat" Flotilla

We are indebted to **Franklin Ellis**, for yet another interesting bit of history from the "Black Cat" Flotilla. Franklin served consecutively as gunnery officer, engineering officer, and executive officer aboard LCI(G) 728, one of the ships of that renowned flotilla.

29 March 1945

FROM: Captain J. H. Morrill, USN

TO: All Officers and Men, LCI Force PALAU

SUBJECT: Relinquishment of Command

1. I have this date been relieved of the Command of LCI Flotilla THIRTEEN and LCI Force PALAU by Commander Maurice B. Brown.
2. I trust and fully expect that you will continue to render the same faithful and brave service for your new Commander as you have for me in the past.
3. It is appropriate that I should tell you at this time that you have performed courageously and without faltering, combat duty as arduous, difficult and dangerous, as any to be found in this war. Due to the nature of your operations and the necessity for concealing our exact intentions from the enemy it has not been possible to give you but very little of the customary publicity and public acclaim accorded larger assault operations; nor has there been, for the most part, opportunity for individual awards and personal recognition. Your unflinching, uncomplaining and courageous performance of duty without hope of personal reward in the face of a fanatical enemy is, in my mind, a higher mark of distinction and bravery than any that could be give you. Your unswerving loyalty to each other and to your cause has achieved such perfect teamwork that it is completely impossible to single out any individual ship or person for praise not equally deserved by all.
4. It is my regret that I am not personally going to participate with you in the successful conclusion of this small and local, but nevertheless one of the most difficult, of the war's operations.
5. It is my desire that a copy of this letter of recognition of heroic services be placed in the official record and service record of every officer and enlisted man of this command.



# The Chaplain's Corner



Some people refer to you as the World War II Generation. Tom Brokaw called you “The Greatest Generation.” And when you stop and think about it, here were and are indeed a lot of great things about you.

You had great melodies in your music—Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and many others. What generation has had better music than yours?

You had great devotion to family life, commitment to marriage, romance in your courtships, responsibility in parenting, courtesy and respect for your mothers and fathers, pride in your togetherness as a family. What generation has been more family-centered than yours?

And perhaps most dramatically, you had great loyalty in all your relationships—you were loyal to God, loyal to your church, loyal to your school, loyal to your hometown loyal to your job, loyal to your country, loyal to your neighbors, loyal to your friends. What generation has ever been more true to their relationships?

As we prepare for another Independence Day I think about the sacrifice of generations that preceded mine, This story comes to mind:

As I slid into the aisle seat, I noticed them; two older men coming down the aisle together, one of them walking shakily with a cane, the other tenderly helping to steady his friend.

Shortly after the plane took off, the more feeble man had a dramatic seizure. He was convulsing, writhing and trembling terribly. His friend held onto him, reassuringly, spoke to him, and somehow got a pill into his mouth. The seizure subsided and the man fell asleep. His loyal friend covered him with a blanket and put a pillow under his head and a cold cloth on his face. The friend then turned and said to me, “I’m so sorry. I had hoped this would not happen on the plane. He has these seizures once or twice a month and he had one just a few days ago. We did not expect another one this soon.”

“It’s OK,” I said to him. “I just wish I could have been more helpful. And I have to tell you, I was touched by the tender way you helped him. Are you brothers?”

“Well,” he said with a smile. “We are not blood brothers, but he is like a brother to me. He saved my life during World War II. We were Army buddies. He is from Texas and I grew up in Ohio. We met in basic training and we were in the D-Day invasion together. We were both wounded. I was hit in the leg and I couldn’t walk. I couldn’t get up; and he came back for me. He had shrapnel wounds all across his arms, chest and head. The head wounds cause the seizures.”

The man paused for a moment and then he said, “I don’t know how in the world he did it, but somehow he stayed on his feet and came back and dragged me to safety. Every step was so painful for him. Every step he would cry out in agony. I kept telling him to leave me behind and go on and save himself, but he told me, ‘No way. No way I’m leaving you behind,’ and finally he got us to a medic.

The compassionate friend looked over at his sleeping buddy and then he said “A year ago, I found out that he has this condition and was having these seizures. His wife had died and I had lost mine, too, three years before. So I sold my house in Ohio. I quit my job - it was way past time for me to retire anyway. And I came down here to Texas to take care of my friend. He needs care around the clock. I’ll help him and take care of him as long as he needs me.”

“That’s an amazing story,” I said to him. “What an incredible friend you are!” And he said, “It’s the least I can do. He laid his life on the line for me. He saved my life! After what he did for me, there is nothing I wouldn’t do for him. I owe him everything!”

That’s a great story to remember this Independence Day. It’s also a great story to remember when we think about our faith. Serving God is the least we can do. God created us. God gave us life. God repeatedly saves our lives. After what God has done for us, there should be nothing we wouldn’t do for God. We owe God everything!

So, on July 4, 2010, we remember with deep gratitude all those who laid their lives on the line for the cause of freedom, and we remember with deeply grateful hearts our God who gave us life that we might live in freedom.

*—Agape, Chaplain Mike*

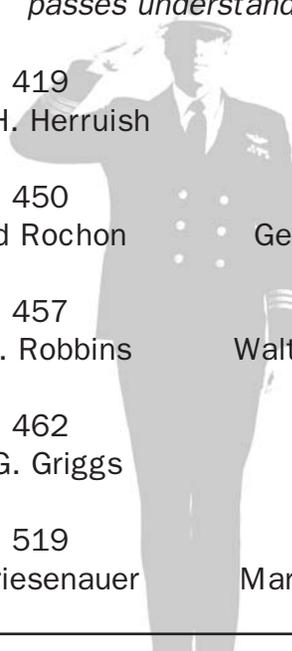


# IN MEMORIAM

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of these shipmates who have sailed for their final port since our last newsletter

*“Almighty and eternal God, from whose love we cannot be parted, either by death or life; hear our prayers and thanksgiving for those whom we here remember.*

*“Grant unto sorrowing family and shipmates the blessing of your peace that passes understanding.”*



LCIs 91 and 92 Herbert Nolda	LCI 419 William H. Herruish	LCI 519 Louis Sava	LCI 803 Jack Blair
LCI 96 Marshall L. Lee	LCI 450 Leonard Rochon	LCI 632 Gerald G. O'Brian	LCI 806 Leonard J. Devine
LCI 346 Robert P. Jones	LCI 457 Floyd G. Robbins	LCI 704 Walter A. Griesemer	LCI 814 Curtis Culpepper
LCI 412 Donald McGranahan	LCI 462 David G. Griggs	LCI 726 Ben Black	LCI 1028 Elmo E. Flinders
	LCI 519 Omar Griesenauer	LCI 758 Martin McDonough	

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*Martin McDonough, who is listed in this Memorial, sent us this poem before his death.*

## *A Prayer for Sailors*

*By Eileen Mahoney*

*In ocean waters, no poppies blow,  
No Crosses stand in ordered row  
There young hearts sleep beneath the wave  
The spirited, the good, the brave  
But stars a constant vigil keep,  
For those who lie beneath the deep.  
'Tis true you cannot kneel in prayer  
On certain spot and think "He's there"  
But you can to the ocean go—  
See whitecaps marching row on row;  
Know one for him will always ride  
In and out on every tide.*

*And when your span of life is passed,  
He'll meet you at the "Captain's Mast"  
And they who mourn on distant shore  
For sailors who come home no more,  
Can dry their eyes and pray, remembering these  
Who rest beneath the heaving seas,  
For stars that shine and winds that blow  
And whitecaps marching, row on row.  
And they can never lonely be  
For when they lived—they chose the sea.*



***Steve Dudrow shows us how Venice, Florida, remembers D-Day.***



# Need Help? Answers? Here's Your Officers and Board of Directors

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

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**803-865-5665**

Please send information or questions about membership, dues payment, address, e-mail or telephone changes to them.

Please send information concerning the death of an LCI shipmate to Jim Talbert and any communications concerning *Elsie Item* to John Cummer

# USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

If you served aboard an LCI, you are eligible to join our Association as a regular member.  
If you are a relative of someone who served aboard an LCI or if you just have a desire to have a part in remembering those who so served, you are invited to join as an Affiliate.

DUES ARE \$25.00 PER YEAR, June 1 through May 31.

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

## I. For Application as a Regular Member:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
LCI Served On \_\_\_\_\_ Rank/Rate \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation or Former Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Help, please! As a precaution we'd like to have an alternate name and address that we might contact in case we can't reach you:**

Alternate Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

## II. For Application as an Affiliate:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_  
My \_\_\_\_\_ (father, grandfather, uncle, etc.) whose name is/was \_\_\_\_\_  
served on LCI Number \_\_\_\_\_ (If unknown or if you did not have a relative who served on an LCI, leave blank)  
My Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Help, please! As a precaution we'd like to have an alternate name and address that we might contact in case we can't reach you:**

Alternate Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

*Privacy notice: Information solicited in this application for membership will be used only as needed for official business within the Association. No information will be released outside the Association or its agents without the consent of the member(s) concerned*

Make Check payable to: **USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION**

Send Application and Check to:  
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**c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc.**  
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**Columbia, SC 29229**

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**“...AND THE  
FLAG WAS  
STILL THERE!”**

**Sailors aboard LCI(G) 442  
admire a flag hid by  
Filipino Guerillas  
for four years**

