



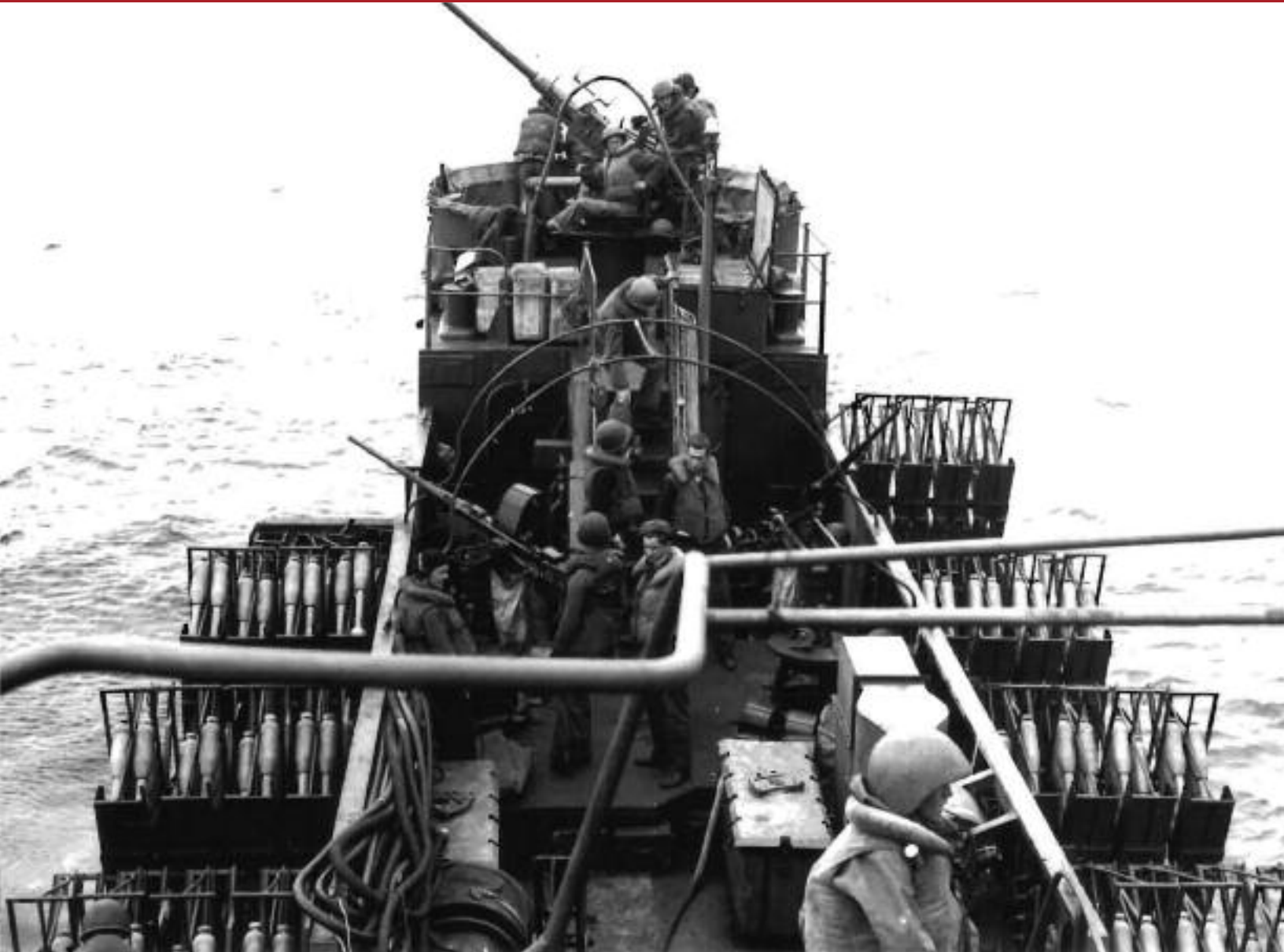
"THE ELSIE ITEM"

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

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

OCTOBER 2010

ISSUE #73



**FIREPOWER
FOR INVASIONS
LCI(G) 561**

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

IN THIS ISSUE

Our feature article this year comes from an active duty Captain serving at the United States Naval Academy. **Capt. Steve J. Coughlin**, Director of Professional Development at the United States Naval Academy, shares with us a speech he made at the Naval Academy in which he honors **David DuBrul**, Commanding Officer of USS LCI 553, for his leadership and professional skill at the landings on Omaha Beach, Normandy, on D-Day. To my knowledge we have never before had such a tribute to an LCler from a senior officer holding an important position at Annapolis.

About our Cover:

“The business end of an LCI Gunboat”

That's the description **Connie Mulherin** (seated in the pointer's seat of that bow 40mm) likes to give about LCI(G) 561. In his story of his WWII service, *A Wartime Sailor*, Connie describes his ship thusly:

“The 561 was altered to a rocket carrying landing craft by removing the two ramps and replacing them with a battery of rocket launchers. The original LCI was equipped with five 20mm guns, but the three forward positions (two on the gun deck and one on the bow) were replaced with the larger 40mm's and two more 20mm's were mounted in the lower forward well deck. The troop quarters were changed to ammunition magazines and larger crew accommodations, since the ship's company rose from 20 men to 75. Instead of ferrying troops onto the beaches, the LCIs with their added firepower now had a stronger capability in leading the smaller landing craft into the beaches.”

FLASH BULLETIN!

Dates for 2011 Reunion Set!

The 2011 reunion will be held at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, Septmber 7-11, 2011! Full details will be included in the next issue of Elsie Item but for now mark those dates on your calendar. This will again be a joint reunion with the LSM/LSMR group.



A Word from the President/Editor



Greetings once again, Shipmates!

In a word—the Cincinnati reunion was great!

About 135 of our members joined an equal number of LSM/LSMR vets to enjoy, once again, the reunion with shipmates of long standing and getting to know lots of others who shared in our WWII experiences. Obviously the move to joint reunions was the right decision. The two associations blended together without a hitch. You'll read more about it and see some pictures in this issue.

Two important decisions were made in our business meeting. First, to approve the change in the by-laws bringing affiliates into full membership and second, to have at least one more national reunion in 2011 with the LSM/LSMR association. Both groups felt that it would be best to pick a location in the middle states to make travel as easy as possible. Subsequently, the two groups agreed that Nashville would be the location and that the reunion would be held in the fall.

Ted Dey, President of Armed Forces Reunions, Inc., is working now on making hotel arrangements. We had hoped to have the dates finalized by the time this newsletter came out, but negotiations are not finished yet. As soon as possible we will get the word out to you so that you can pencil the reunion in on next year's calendar.

Now, we have a couple of housekeeping chores to take care of:

First, We must apologize to **Curtis Culpepper**, LCI 814, for mistakenly including his name in the memorial list for the last issue. What happened was that Curtis had entered the name of John Wiedeman on the LCI web page and the information was read wrong. Curtis also reported the names of two other crewmen from the 814 who have passed on. We are including those two names and that of John Wiedeman in the list for this issue.

Also, we want to alert you all to another source of contact with fellow LCers. For some time LCler **Fred Langston** has been circulating a monthly USS LCI NET Newsletter. Anyone not currently receiving the monthly "USS LCI Net" Email newsletter can submit their name and Email address to: Fred Langston at fglangston@yahoo.com and they will be added to the mailing list. Anyone not having an email address and wishing to receive the newsletter via regular mail may send their name, address and phone number to: Fred Langston, 1464 Graves Ave Ste 107-223, El Cajon, CA 92021.

And finally, a reminder about whom to contact for what: Please send information or questions about membership, dues payment, address, e-mail or telephone changes to **Nehemiah Communications**; information concerning the death of an LCI shipmate to **Jim Talbert** and any communications concerning *Elsie Item* to John Cummer,

Once more we've found some good stories to pass on to you. Enjoy a good read!

-John Cummer



The Cincinnati Reunion in Pictures

(Our thanks to Hal Bleyhl for sharing his photos with us)

I. The visit to the U.S. Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, OH

“BocksCar” The B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki



The elevator built into FDR's plane to accommodate him in his wheel chair



Harry Truman's plane, "The Independence"



II. The Dinner Cruise Steamboat on the “Beautiful Ohio”



Boarding – A bit larger than an LCI!



John and Patricia Cummer enjoy the evening



The beautiful Cincinnati skyline



Deboarding – Conclusion of a delightful evening



III. Meetings

Vice President John France and California State Director Joe Flynn meet with the affiliates



The Association business meeting



IV. The Memorial Service

John Gatton joins Pat Bleyhl and Patricia Cummer for the memorial service.



Chaplain Gatton's impressive ceremony: Seven stones, representing the seven hills on which Cincinnati was built and virtues of faithful sailors.

Hal Bleyhl participates in the candle lighting ceremony.



...and our banquetees!



Dr. Charlie Crandall and wife Liz



John Swift and friend Nell Wiggins



Hal Bleyhl and his new bride, Pat



Connie and Hanna Mulherin





Joe Flynn proudly displays his LCI finery



*“Dancing with the Stars!”
Larry Cronin and his daughter Diane*



*“Wetz” Wetzel steals Joe Flynn’s wife,
Gloria, for a picture*



*The 1940s again—Bill and Betty Keeler
loved the “big band” music*

LCI Association Votes to Amend By-Laws At 2010 Cincinnati Reunion

Reported by Joe Flynn

USS LCI National Association members at the Cincinnati Reunion took a major step forward to expand By Laws to change present Affiliate members and those interested in recording and maintaining LCI history to full membership.

These changes stem from direction by President **John Cummer** to answer the question, "What specific parts of the By Laws need to be modified to incorporate Affiliates and 'those interested in LCIs' and maintain our tax exempt status as a 501(c)(19) Veteran's Organization?" Under original Association By Laws and earlier Internal Revenue Service rules membership in veteran's organizations was limited primarily to WW II Veterans with provision for spouses and some family members. Since many LCI members have given gift memberships to sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters and other family members this review was necessary.

Fortunately, one of our Affiliates, **Robert A. Wright, Jr.**, whose father served aboard LCI's 20, 996, and 997, is also a Certified Public Accountant. His assistance in providing information on IRS guidelines and guidance in maintaining the Association's tax exempt status was invaluable. Robert alerted us to an IRS regulation change in 2007 which expanded membership in Veteran's Organizations to include all veterans of military service. This change also now makes eligible for membership the parents, siblings, offspring and grandchildren of those veterans.

With these changes the way is cleared to incorporate all affiliate members into our Association as full voting members. Since many of our Affiliates have served in the Armed Forces, they can further qualify their close relatives as members.

This will enable the Association to maintain its tax exempt status. Some additional information on military service will be collected on membership renewals but this should be minimal. Changes in the application for membership have been made to do this. The revised application form is in this issue.

Other minor changes agreed to in Portland, Mobile, and Branson Reunions were also included in this update. Many of these changes were housekeeping updates to accommodate Board meetings via internet and cut down on travel. Others recognized the fact that some State directors winter in the south and but still keep their home state LCI group going.

An important addition to the by-laws is the statement that "The association will maintain compliance at all times with the United States Internal Revenue Code and specifically IRC Section 501(c) (19) and all related Internal Revenue Service Regulations." This is necessary to allow all Association operations and contributions to the Association to be tax deductible.

These changes received a unanimous vote of approval of those present at the Cincinnati reunion.



Connecting the Dots: A Tribute to CDR Don DuBrul (LCI-553)

By
Captain Steve J. Coughlin
Director of Professional Development
United States Naval Academy

Captain Steve J. Coughlin enlisted in the Navy in 1981 as a nuclear machinist mate. In 1985 he entered the Naval Academy and graduated in 1988. Since then, he has spent twenty-two years as a surface warfare officer serving in destroyers and frigates. He is the former Commander of Patrol Coastal Squadron ONE and of USS Bainbridge (DDG 96).

In May 2010 I had the honor of being the guest speaker at an awards ceremony at the United States Naval Academy where I serve as the Director of Professional Development for the Brigade of Midshipmen. I am a career Surface Warfare Officer and 1988 graduate of the Naval Academy. This particular ceremony, among many held during commissioning week, was for the midshipmen who participated in the Naval Academy Sailing Program. With nearly two-hundred craft, the Academy's sailing program is arguably the most comprehensive and all-inclusive program of its kind when compared to all other naval officer commissioning sources. The reason for this is that there is a strong belief at the Naval Academy that training midshipmen in sailboats is one of the best forms of early indoctrination into a mariner's profession.

Sailboats provide a genuine understanding of the maritime environment and up-close exposure to the forces that control the movement of a vessel while demonstrating the intricacies of life at sea. These sailboats are truly nautical classrooms that make it possible to teach the most fundamental appreciation for safe practices and prudent decision-making afloat.

During the reception that followed the awards ceremony, one of the graduating midshipman's parents asked me how I first became interested in the navy some thirty years ago when I was a young man living on Long Island. I answered the question with a fairly general response that was suitable for such a gathering. My key points were the call for service to our nation, training and education benefits, and adventure that comes from traveling the world on a navy ship. But later that day as I reflected harder about what really led me to begin this amazing journey, the truth became crystal clear.

It all started aboard a twenty-five foot sailboat on the Long Island Sound sometime around 1980 under the tutelage of **Commander Don DuBrul**, former commanding officer of LCI-553. He commanded that vessel on 06 June 1944 at Omaha Beach during the invasion of Europe. And it was just my good luck that after WWII he and his new bride, Betty (to this day she remains his greatest advocate and the personification of a Navy Wife), moved to Levittown, New York, into a home that was designed for the returning veteran and was located right next door to the house I grew up in. He was affectionately known to me as Uncle Don, which spoke to his kind disposition but completely masked the warrior mind-set that lived within. I had no idea at the time but the man who took me along sailing, to provide a strong back for the manual work necessary to haul lines and trim sails, was teaching me the ways of a ship including all the nuances of coastal navigation, fundamental seamanship, and what it must be like spending a life at sea conducting our nation's business on the world's oceans.

Like so many of his generation who are advancing in age, Don DuBrul passed away not too long ago but he left behind a tradition of selfless service and he was truly loved by his family, friends, and shipmates.

As I think back about our time together I have come to realize that during those hot summer days spent under sail, I had learned from a master of the mariner's trade. There simply could not have been a better mentor for a young protégé than the neighbor who took me under his wing to expose me to the vastness of the sea while instilling a sense of seriousness about the importance of naval service. So, I think it is only fitting to pay tribute to an outstanding mariner, a terrific officer, and one of the many LCI sailors who saved the world from tyranny by delivering combat troops to the hostile shores of our enemies. In today's vernacular, we call it defeating an adversary's anti-access capabilities and we now have the advantage of using advanced technology to achieve such military objectives. But when LCIs did the job, the greatest force-multiplier was pure grit and guts that ultimately lead to glory.



In my mind, then Lieutenant Junior Grade Don DuBrul is the best example of modern-age combat leadership that I have found after a lifetime of studying the subject. But what I find most interesting is that I don't think he was aware of his greatness since he was just one of many among the finest war fighting mariners that the U.S. Navy has ever produced. He was an LCI sailor all the way with the kind of competence and humility that inspired everybody who lived within his circle of influence. I know because I am one of them.

Don DuBrul enlisted in the United States Navy in 1938 and was assigned to *USS Argonne (AS-10)* home ported at Pearl Harbor Naval Station. On the morning of December 7, 1941, *Argonne* was caught in the middle of the infamous air attacks from the Japanese Imperial Navy. Her crew immediately manned anti-aircraft gun batteries and defended their ship with every available weapon. And before that tragic day ended, crewmen such as Don DuBrul were helping to get wounded men out of damaged ships, recovering bodies from the water, and assisting with salvage and repair efforts to the best of the tender's ability.

After surviving the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Don DuBrul was assigned to convoy duty during the Battle of the Atlantic as chief signalman in *USS Carmick (DD-493)*. *Carmick* performed escort duties primarily from Norfolk, Virginia to Newfoundland, Northern Ireland, and Casablanca before being assigned to hunter-killer operations with Destroyer Squadron 18. Coincidentally, later in the war, *Carmick* was a part of the anti-submarine and anti-E-boat screening force guarding the flanks of the leading ships off Omaha Beach where Don DuBrul would later handle LCI-553 into position on the shore. I would submit that the WWII destroyer force acted as somewhat of a breeding ground for future LCI sailors. It certainly did in the case of Don DuBrul. In fact, he told me personally that it was his XO in *Carmick*, LCDR Gordon Pai'ea Chung Hoon (later to be the first Asian-American flag officer in the U.S. Navy and recipient of the Navy Cross and Silver Star) who made a navigator out of him. And I know for a fact, after serving as Executive Officer and Commanding Officer of Arleigh Burke Class ships that destroyer men tend to develop good habits through endless drills and exercises designed to cultivate a unified fighting spirit. From what I have seen, they live by a code that values sheer hard work and determination to accomplish any mission, any time, any place. As our country's point-men for maritime supremacy, they pride themselves on being twenty-four seven, multi-mission, ever ready combat mariners. Clearly, the same ethos existed in the WWII LCI community where many sailors served tours in destroyers before amphibious training and where they made mission success a way of life in LCIs.

After earning a commission and undergoing amphibious training at Solomons, Maryland Don DuBrul quickly gained a reputation as a serious-minded officer who ran a tight ship. These qualities came in handy when he sailed LCI-553 into battle at Normandy as a part of Landing Craft Infantry Group 34 of Flotilla 12. For someone who did not live through it, I can just picture the chaos as the LCIs approached the beach with all of its defensive obstacles, mortar and artillery fire, and wreckage not to mention the complexity of maneuvering the landing force. Even under benign conditions and if nothing had gone wrong this was complicated work.

But as fate would have it, when LCI-553 deployed her stern anchor less than 100 yards from Omaha Beach it did not hold; thus, allowing the strong cross-current to push the stern of the vessel east making her nearly parallel to the beach. Although Fox Company of 2nd Battalion, 115 Infantry Regiment debarked as quickly as possible, the tribulations of LCI-553 were just beginning.

For the captain, this day definitely was not going as planned and for every moment he spent beached time gave the advantage to German 88mm artillery rounds that would eventually find their targets. This must have been absolute bedlam and a moment that Don DuBrul felt the "burden of command" where there was no one to turn to and all eyes looked to one person for guidance.

I cannot imagine what goes through the mind of a man under such extreme pressure. But with a cool head and unflappable calmness Captain DuBrul coordinated three attempts to have LCI-555 tow him off the beach. However, with artillery fire increasing and bracketing the craft, this was a futile undertaking. Without a stern anchor to pull them off the beach and the tide rapidly falling, LT(jg) DuBrul made the toughest decision a captain would ever have to make...abandon ship.

It was then that the men of LCI-553 evacuated their ship and dug into the beach. Even in this situation, the captain did not rest. Don DuBrul spent the rest of the day trying to obtain welding equipment from the Beach Master in order to make emergency repairs to his crippled ship so he could again attempt to get her back out to sea at the next high tide. Unfortunately, relentless German artillery made that plan virtually impossible. Realizing that LCI-553 was finished, Don DuBrul arranged to get his crew back to England on Landing Ship Tank (LST) 510 that was shuttling wounded soldiers across the Channel.



When I first heard the story of Don DuBrul driving his LCI into the crucible of battle and landing ground forces under heavy fire then having the fortitude to overcome extreme adversity and adapt to an untenable situation, I thought it was the greatest single act of bravery that any naval officer could perform. His physical courage under lethal circumstances while leading his crew in combat is an example of heroism that should never be lost to history and one of the many reasons why those on active duty today connect so strongly with our heritage.

Don DuBrul and all LCI sailors have truly given us a legacy of valor and daring gallantry to reflect upon and aspire to repeat. Before concluding I must comment on the remarkable seamanship that was required to handle an LCI in the surf. The teamwork and timing of such an evolution was a synchronization of art and science orchestrating the movement of bow ramps and stern anchors while balancing the forces on the ship between conn and helm, and simultaneously manning gunnery stations for self defense. Only a varsity level mariner could pull this off. So, in some strange way this brings me back to the importance of sailboats at the Naval Academy. From Omaha Beach to the Long Island Sound and now on the Severn River in Annapolis, those very same seamanship proficiencies are being taught to midshipmen so that they will be the best possible mariners when they enter the fleet. Who knows where they will serve in the future or what oceans and beaches they will fight on but they will understand the ways of the sea and the extraordinary effort that it takes to prepare for naval service. On 28 May 2010, the Naval Academy commissioned 256 midshipmen who will serve as ensigns in the United States Naval Surface Forces and every single one of them has had instruction under sail. My hat is off to CDR Don DuBrul for passing on the requisite nautical skills from one generation to another under the guise of small craft sailing. For that, I am forever in his debt. And with great confidence, I am happy to report that the tradition of rigorous sail training continues today at the United States Naval Academy.

REFERENCES:

France, John, The Fortunate Redirection: Landing Craft Infantry (LCI) Group 34 of Flotilla 12 at Normandy, *The Elsie Item*, June 2009.

Grastenor, Melville, Landing Craft for Invasion, *The National Geographic Magazine*, July 1944.

Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., profile Landing Craft Infantry, 24 November 2009, available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landing_Craft_Infantry.



“In Defense of LCIs”

A Navy Reservist takes on the Big Ship Navy

It was 1944. Lieutenant Perry C. Hill, USNR, had commanded LCIs and was now Commander of LCI Group 44, Flotilla, 15, in the South Pacific. He had had about all he could take of disparagement of LCIs by the Annapolis “ring knockers” and so decided to explain to them just what LCIs and their crews were like. Somehow, he persuaded Naval Institute Proceedings, the professional journal of the U. S. Navy, to print his defense of the maligned ships.

Here is his article. He called it “Love Charlie Item”:

Press efforts to characterize the LCI in the public mind have run the gamut from “ugly Duckling” to “little lady of the sea.” Lubberly writers have libeled her as a “barge,” and in at least one landlocked corner of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, no less, she is informally but ignominiously classed with “little boats.”

The Landing Craft Infantry, gentlemen, is a ship. To a seaman’s eye she is no more ugly than any functionally designed vessel. If an aircraft carrier is not ugly – and I have never heard them so described – then no ship is ugly. Nor is the LCI a barge, in the sense that “barge” suggests to a layman. She is a fully equipped and competent seagoing vessel. Nor – shame on the Bureau – is the LCI a “little boat.” She is a commissioned ship of the United States Navy.

Elsie Item’s dignity having thus been defended it must be said in honesty that she is no lady either. She has a nasty motion in a seaway, and her answers to helm and screw are weird and wonderful. Most LCIs being skippered by recent lawyers, reporters, and insurance agents, it is not surprising that stanchions occasionally crumble when they come alongside, or that they sometimes broach on stormy beaches. Rather the wonder is that these lubbers have learned to handle them as well as they do. It is not just brashness that makes many a seasoned LCI handler feel a destroyer would be putty in his hands.

We Amphibious Force reservists well know that most of us are not great seamen. We have no delusion that we personally are winning the war. We know the limitations of our craft. But we are proud of our little commands and of the job they are doing, and we ask: who would do it if we didn’t? We squirm under condescension and fairly faint with gratitude at instances of recognition and respect.

Take the case of the ill-mannered destroyer who seemed to think that LCIs didn’t count. She churned through a formation of twelve LCIs standing into a harbor. Standard distance was 200 yards, and all down the line the voice tubes cried, “Hard right rudder,” “Stop all engines,” “All back full.” As soon as she had effectively disrupted the column the can blandly anchored, as much as to say, I guess I showed those fellows where they get off.”

Then, bless his soul, there was the captain of a hulking Amphibious Force flagship that inadvertently dropped her hook a scant 100 yards abeam of a little old LCI at anchor. There was a flurry in the LCI to move away, but the flagship upped anchor and shifted to a roomier berth. Immediately her gig hit the water and Four Stripes himself clambered through the life lines of the LCI and asked to see her commanding officer, who had one and a half. “I want to apologize,” said Four Stripes, “for that clumsy maneuver. The anchor detail misunderstood a command. I assure you it won’t happen again. I am very sorry about it.”

The little skipper, caught out in a skivvy shirt and khaki shorts, was struck dumb by the very fact of the apology, let alone its profuseness and sincerity. That captain, to whom an LCI is as much a ship; of the Navy as his own, and entitled to equal courtesy, is our favorite candidate for Admiral.

The LCI – all 157 feet and 300 tons of her – is a ship. She cruises unaided over many thousand miles of open sea. She has most of the “big ship” appurtenances – gyroscopic and magnetic compasses, radios, electric steering and engine telegraph, the best of sextants, chronometers and gun sights. Many of her larger sisters would envy her galley and reefer. In a seaway she is bouncy but able. She hauls troops from the near to the far shore and disembarks them on the assault beach in two or three minutes.

Keel-less, with a maximum draft of 6 feet, her leeway in a beam wind or sea is terrific. Backing, she is as nearly unmanageable as a trailer on a truck. With her high freeboard acting like a sail, she yaws violently to a bow anchor, and backs into the wind no matter what. Withal she is comparatively speedy and highly maneuverable. She is the tidiest, shippiest amphibious craft of the war by several nautical miles.

Let there be no quarrel with LST men. Theirs is an altogether different type of vessel. LCIs are trickier, less stable, but far



more responsive to the handler. But LCI men give place to none in their admiration of the superb job being done by LSTs. They are *the* ship of this war. No other combat type has gone farther and oftener with more and bigger anti-Axis cargoes than the clumsy, plodding, tireless LSTs. They are dull but magnificent.

The LCI is concededly less efficient. She has great limitations. As a carrier she can haul only foot soldiers with what they can pack on their backs. Any cargo must be manhandled up and down steep ladders and foot ramps. But for that one job as a troop carrier she has two unique assets: (1) she can both make a sea voyage and unload directly on the far beach without transshipping into LCs and LCVPs; and (2) ten or a dozen LCI's would have to be sunk to equal the loss of one attack transport. There have been no such LCI losses; with their narrow beam and considerable speed they are not easy to hit, and if hit they are not easily sunk.

LCI duty has other compensations. Within five minutes after hitting the beach she may be on the way home again while the LSTs spend several hours unloading, hung up helpless on a coral beach. LCI men like to travel in the company of LSTs (known in the trade as Large Slow Targets) for it gives them a feeling of relative safety from air attackers who naturally go for the bigger vessels. (The Japs have been known to claim a "small aircraft carrier" when they hit an LST.) Then, too, when an LCI has disembarked her troops and returned to base she is likely to be at leisure to repair leaking mufflers and chip paint until the next operation. But the LST will just get another load and shove off again.

In recent months, however, naval ingenuity has gone far toward circumventing the apparent limitations on LCI usefulness. Many of them have been stripped of ramps and soldier bunks and fitted out as support gunboats, rocket barrage ships, fire fighters, demolition ships, "smokers," or dispatch vessels. Their shallow draft, speed and smallness are eminent qualifications for close-in work – messing up a defended beach, blasting coal heads, screening small boat waves, surveying shoals.

Perhaps there is wisdom as well as necessity in officering amphibious ships almost entirely with reservists. There is a story of a seasoned merchant skipper who had to be relieved of his LST command; he couldn't screw himself up to deliberately ramming her on a beach. The old principles of seamanship go by the board, and violating them comes easier to men without a lifelong indoctrination in them. Not only do you beach a sea going LCI, but usually you anchor by the stern, another practice which horrifies old salts. There are two reasons for this: first, she lies steady as a church to her stern hook; and second, the bow cable - for reasons known only to BuShips – is less than half

as long and seldom gives adequate scope.

Furthermore, in retracting from a beach the LCI skipper must deliberately back down toward his own cable, an obviously nefarious practice. When you are backing full on a sticky beach and suddenly your bow comes free, it requires nice timing to heave in the cable and stop the screws at the right moment to avert an unhappy contact between the same. Even if you have cable guards between your skegs, the cry of "Anchor sighted" is more than pleasing music to an LCI skipper's nervous ears. Of course the winch grinds eternally slow if you have to "get the hell out of there" (even if nobody is shooting at you, an LST probably is bulling right in astern of you), but without that precious anchor to seaward you might have broached a perfectly good ship. Thus all blessings are mixed.

Watch the skipper approach a beach. He screws up his mouth, cocks his head, and twirls the seat of his bridge stool in unconscious effort to aid the rudders. He must put her on at right angles, hard enough to stay on but gently enough to come off again, with effects of wind and sea and current to be gauged. The ticklish moments are after the hook is down and the cable is paying out astern and the screws are slowed or stopped and steering control is critically reduced. Then at the moment of impact, with the cable straining to hold her stern in line:

"Let go the ramps!"

Now watch him. He paces his tiny open bridge as if the deck were red hot. He megaphones the troops to move faster. He sees the ramps swing precariously, threatening to jump off the rollers; hurriedly he adjusts engines and rudders to offset the swing. He sees the bow lift a little as the load lightens and the surf rolls in; he drives her on a little harder. The last soldier starts down the ramp.

"Retract the ramps, Stern anchor stand by to back down."

Now comes another crucial moment. Will she come off? Did he ride up too far? Will the surf lift her? The propeller wash surges under her flat bottom, churning sand. He squints at a piece of driftwood on the beach in line with the forward end of a ramp platform. For a few seconds, half a minute, nothing happens. Slowly then, by inches, the gap between platform and driftwood begins to grow. Then with a rush she floats free.

"Stop all."

The cable reel sings in high gear, and the LCI skipper's brief but racking Purgatory is ended. With 250 souls aboard he has

grounded a million dollars' worth of ship, disembarked the troops and got her free. Of course, in the stern reckoning of logistics and weighing of expendables, his only mission was to get the soldiers on the beach. If he got his ship off again, so much the better. But you can't blame a captain, even a bond salesman on an LCI, for dividing his thoughts between landing of the soldiers and salvage of his ship. His sigh of relief when the stern anchor is home really implies: "We did a good job of bad seamanship and got away with it!"

LCI men delight in the bumptiousness of some of their leaders. They relish the retort of a flotilla commander bringing his flock into a Solomons anchorage after night maneuvers. The pass was narrow and he had eighteen ships in single column with all running lights brightly burning. The shore signal station challenged the guide ship; Then, either facetious or careless in choice of words, the beach queried: "Is there anybody with you?" This was too much for the commander.

"No," said he. "I am towing the Brooklyn Bridge."

Then there was a group commander leading his string into a New Guinea roadstead. The shoals edging the marked channel were quite deep enough for LCIs, and he was cutting corners. The deep-water captain of a big Navy cargo ship in the channel was shocked and undertook to scold the LCI by semaphore for ignoring navigational marks. The group commander was a veteran before the mast and a crack navigator. Also, he was normally taciturn, and he made no answer. But then, the big fellow became alarmed and flagged:

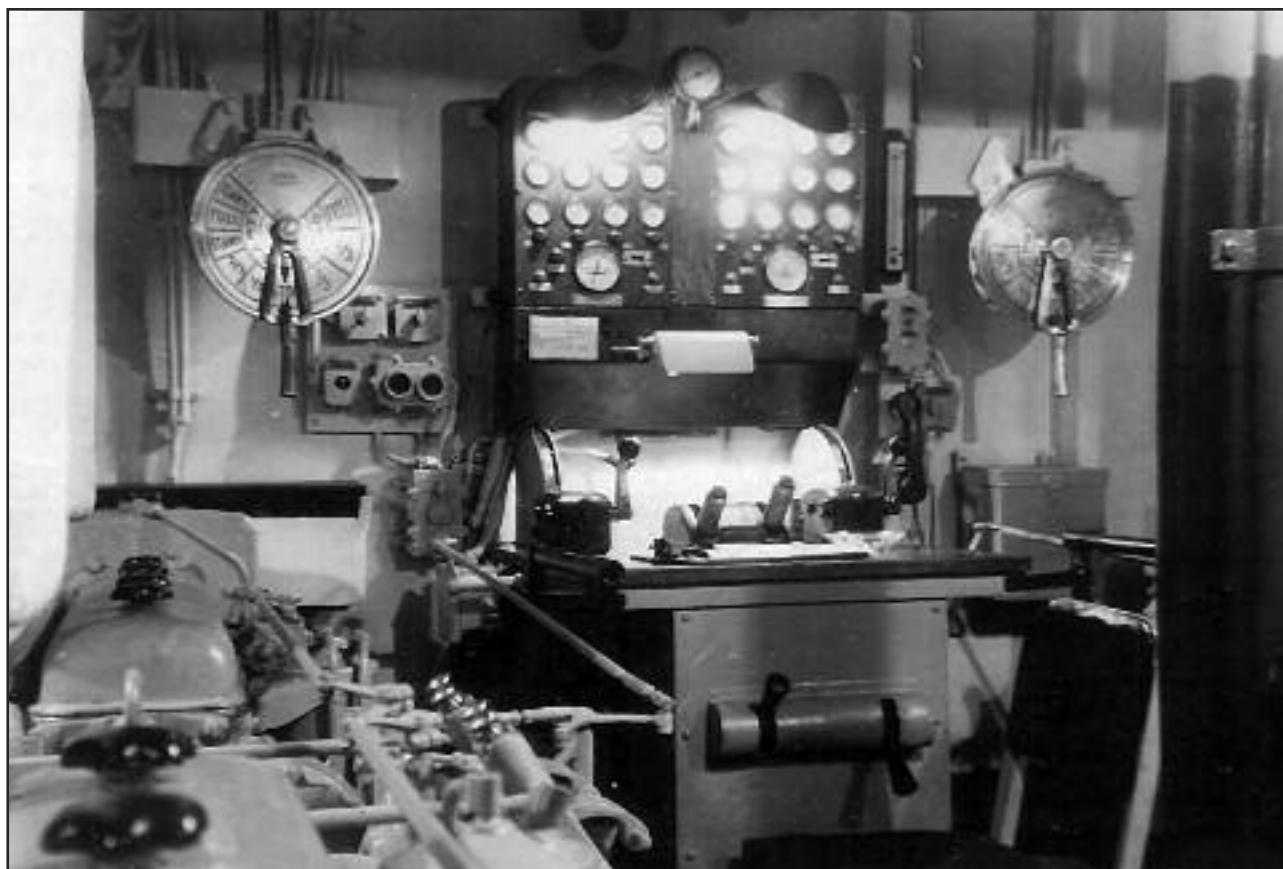
"You are standing into danger."

Now the rule of brevity in communications went by the board.

"In twenty years at sea" our man signaled, "I have never hit a 12 foot shoal with a 6 foot draft."

That ended the conversation.

And here, unfortunately, the remaining pages of the article were missing. We can only surmise, having read to this point, that he might very well have changed the minds of a few regular Navy deprecators of LCIs!



One to make all you old Motor Macs homesick! The throttle station, LCI 579 (courtesy of Bob McGhee)



IN MEMORIAM

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

LCI 11
Culver McCoy

LCI 38
Robert B. Tate

LCI 71
William Whelehan

LCI 80
Robert Lang

LCI 80
Allen Houck

LCI 80
O. G. Moore

LCI 80
Clayton Wood

LCI 80
Brent Finch

LCI 82
Robert Kaminski

LCI 346
George D. Buckman

LCI 346
Laverne Smith

LCI 346
Leonard W. Martin

LCI 355
Jack. B. W. Lawson

LCI 358
Walter D. Cooper

LCI 392
Klein, Edwin R

LCI 409
James N. Leaken

LCI 430
Gordon J. Hynes

LCI 439
Robert H. Reinhardt

LCI 449
Edward R. Hamsher

LCI 450
Thomas W. Campbell

LCI 457
Richard O. Churchill

LCI 499
Joseph Pyzanowski

LCI 555
Louis Harlan

LCI 561
James Pignataro

LCI 561
Daniel Pluchinsky

LCI 561
Charles Taylor

LCI 561
Russell Schumaier

LCI 600
Bernard Mantecchio

LCI 600
Robert Newell

LCI 678
Don H. Donaldson

LCI 707
Jerome Kaplan

LCI 713
Gordon Houser

LCI 742
Frank Tomaschko

LCI 814
Paul Klym

LCI 814
John Sjoken

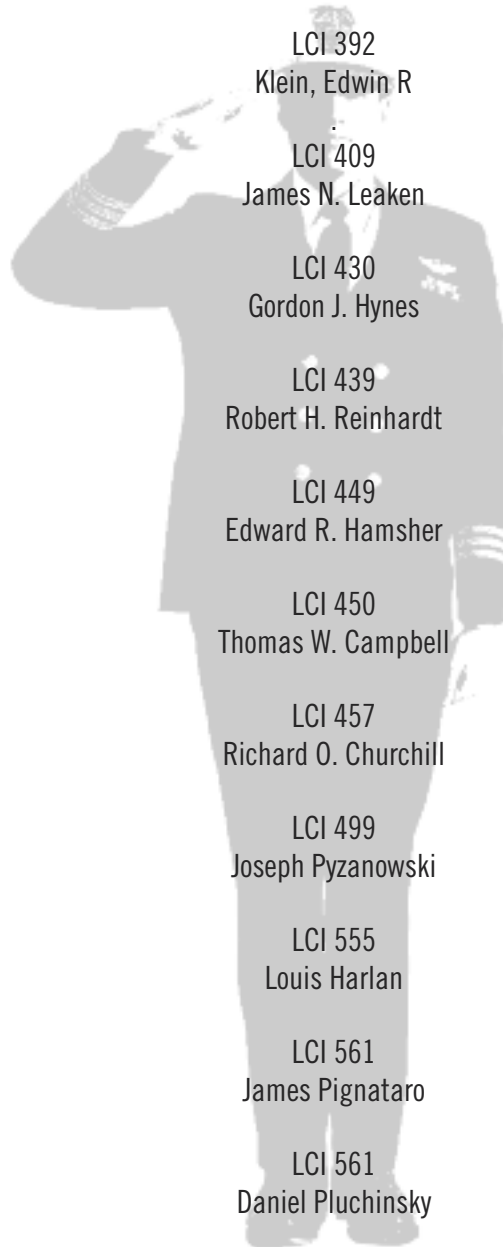
LCI 814
John Wiedeman

LCI 976
Vernon L. Walker

LCI 991
Wallace H. Goodnough

LCI 1029
Czeslaus Chrobot

LCI 1096
Edward J. Wirasnik



A Thought from Chaplain Mike Gatton

The Gratitude Salute



It was a familiar scene as I shook hands with persons leaving church. At the end of the line was a man who occasionally attended worship. As the man came to shake my hand he said, "Reverend, Reverend, what you said today in your sermon was exactly what I needed to hear. Thank you very, very much. It was so helpful to me. It revolutionized my life. Thank you, thank you."

To be honest, I was surprised yet pleased that my words had made such a profound difference in this man's life. I replied, "I'm glad I said something that was helpful to you." Then I asked, "But, I'm curious what in particular was it?"

Without a moment's thought the man answered, "Well, you may remember, you began your sermon by saying that you wanted to talk to us about two things this morning and then in the middle you said, 'That completes this first part of my message and now it's time for the second part.' At that moment I realized I had come to the end of the first part of my life, and it was high time that I got on to the second part. Thank you, Reverend," he said as he left church, "thank you, very much."

In a sense, no matter what our age, today is the beginning of the second part of life for each of us.

Today brings fresh insights and fresh opportunities. We have done nothing to deserve or earn the gifts God shares with us. All we do is receive them. God is Giver. You and I are receivers. And, what do you do when someone gives you a gift? Unless you were raised by wolves, you say "Thank you!" One of the first steps in socialization for children is learning the courtesy of saying "thank you." The writer of the Book of James reminds us that "every generous act" and "every perfect gift" we experience on Earth are in fact "heaven-sent from God." But, how can we demonstrate our thankfulness? How do we recognize the giftedness that lives in our midst?

In 2007 Scott Truitt, a man living in Seattle, came up with the "gratitude salute."

It's very simple. Look a person in the eye, putting a hand over the heart, then bringing the hand down and forward, palm open and up. The "gratitude salute" lets people say, "thank you," personally and profoundly, without ever speaking a word. Gratitude becomes an action, a gesture, not just a word. Or, let me quote the words of Mr. Truitt: "The gesture starts with your hand on your heart as if you're about to do the Pledge of Allegiance. And then you just bring the hand down and out in front of you. It actually means thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Perhaps we all need to offer God a "gratitude salute" — not just with a single gesture, but with our whole body, mind, spirit, with our whole beings. A gratitude salute reveals a heart that is open and over-flowing, a heart that flows outward in the direction of others, and a heart that is implanted with the Word of God.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your sacrifice, for doing something good and true, something everlasting and beautiful. To each of you men of the landing ships and to all those who love you, I salute you!

Agape,

Mike



Ohio Chapter Closes Shop; Donates Treasury to National Association

With regret, the Ohio chapter of the USS LCI National Association has decided to have no more reunions. As the reunion organizer, **Diane Churchill**, contacted members she learned that so many of them reported that ill health and travel difficulties would keep them from attending that another reunion was unfeasible. Conferring with **Jim Aydelotte**, Ohio State Director who now lives in Arizona, Diane made the decision to close shop and donate their treasury to the national association. A check for \$1,000 was presented to President **John Cummer** at the national reunion in Cincinnati.

“We’re very grateful for this generous gift,” said Cummer, “but we deeply regret that the Ohio members will not be able to continue enjoying the great reunions that Jim and Dianne have planned for the past several years.”

In presenting the check, Dianne said, “This generation of the Navy must never be forgotten by the future generations. I know eventually it will be in the hands of the sons and daughters to carry on this great legacy.”

The Cincinnati reunion was a very special one for Diane for her late husband’s name was included in the memorial service.

“The Memorial Service was beautiful,” said Diane, “it was a fitting tribute not only to Dick but all the Shipmates lost over the past year. So many people came up to me to offer their sympathy and share in the loss of Dick. I can’t believe all the good friends we have come to know through the National LCI Association.”

“We all owe a deep debt of gratitude to Diane for all the work she has put into making the Ohio reunions so special,” said Cummer. “It’s good to hear that Diane says that, if all goes well, her daughter and she will see us in Nashville next year.”



Diane Churchill ‘caps’ an LCler at last year’s Ohio state reunion.



Bodo Grober, The German Prisoner From Portland, Oregon

A Wartime Reminiscence of Gordon Smith QM1C, LCI 43

It was probably the third day after D-Day of the invasion of Salerno, Italy that LCI (L) 43 was doing the routine job of taking troops in to the beachhead and taking German or Italian prisoners off the beach.

I was on the beach and heard someone calling,

“Smitty! Hey, Smitty, come here!”

I went over to a small cluster of prisoners and asked what was going on. The response was,

“This Kraut says he is from Portland, Oregon.”

My home at the time of enlistment was in Portland, Oregon.

Surprised that this German POW claimed to have come from my home town, I began questioning him.

“You are from Portland, Oregon?”

“Ja.”

“What High School did you go to?”

“Benson.”

My gosh, I thought, this guy is from Portland!

“What is your name?”

“Bodo Grober”

This kid was hungry, he was wearing a ragged and dirty uniform, was scared witless, didn't have any idea what would happen to him and was just a complete mess.

For this reason, I had to literally drag every single word out of him.

“What are you doing in the German Army?”

“In 1939 my sister and I went over to the Fatherland to visit our Grandparents. Hitler went into Poland in September and I was impressed into the German Army.”

“How long has it been since your mother has heard from you or your sister?”

“Several years.”

“How is your sister?”

“She is well.”

“Where is she?”

“She is with friends.”

“Do you want me to write to your mother?”

“Ja.”

I proceeded to get his mother's address and his sister's name and went on my way.

I did write to Mrs. Grober. Now, our mail was censored and thought I'd better be careful what I wrote. I rambled along and near the bottom to the letter said,

“Oh, by the way. . . . I saw Bodo the other day. He is just fine and he tells me that Gertrude is fine and is with friends.”

Shortly thereafter I received an airmail letter with an envelope stamped “AIR Mail” and “Special Delivery” enclosed and seeking more information about Bodo.

I wrote back, “I have not seen Bodo since I saw him a few weeks ago. However, you should be hearing from him very shortly.”

The following January I came home after a three year absence and did go over to see Mrs. Grober. Bodo had arrived back to the States before I did and she was visiting him in a Prisoner of



War camp in Georgia. The father and two sons were home but, to my surprise, they were downright rude and cold to me. I hastily left.

Time went on. About six or seven years later my wife and I happened to be in southeast Portland. I mentioned that this Mrs. Grober lives over here close by on S. E. Tibetts Street and suggested we go see her.

It was a nice, beautiful spring day. When I pulled up to the address, there was a stocky little gray haired lady alongside her house tending to her flowers. She looked like a typical grandmother with her hair all done up in a "doughnut" and was wearing an apron.

I approached her, introduced myself and asked

"Are you Mrs. Grober?"

"Ja"

"I am Gordon Smi....."

And that was as far as I got.

With tears in her voice, she threw up her arms as said, "Ach! I owe.....you.....so....much!"

I did not have to tell her who Gordon Smith was.

The end of the story is that I used to talk to her once in a while when I was working late at the office. The city directories told me that Bodo was married and was employed as a machinist by the Hyster Company as well as by Iron Fireman.

I never looked Bodo up. Somehow I thought I might embarrass him and I felt that, if he so wished, he could look me up.

On one such call to Mrs. Grober she told me,

"We have lost Bodo"

He had passed away in his 50's from pneumonia. I have not attempted to contact the family.....

Perhaps I should locate Gertrude?

Gordon Smith
QM 1/C LCI [L] #43
Flotilla One



BURIAL AT SEA: USS New York (BB34) Honors Three LCI Sailors

Some memories do not go away easily. That was the case of **Peter Pane**, Brooklyn, NY, who served on the battleship *USS New York (BB34)* during WWII. He has not forgotten the burial at sea service for three LCI sailors who were killed in the fierce action the day before the invasion. LCI (G) s had been assigned to provide fire cover for UDT teams engaged in beach reconnaissance.

Three of the many LCI casualties were brought to the battleship seriously wounded. They died of their wounds. The men were **Donald Stephen Rappold**, S2c, from LCI 474 and **Joseph Edward Davis**, Gunner's Mate, and **Dominick S. Gonzalez**, S1c, from LCI 473.

In addition to his action station, Pane was a member of the ship's band and participated in the ceremony.

Shortly after returning home from the recent LCI reunion in Cincinnati, California State Director **Joe Flynn** received a call from Peter asking for help in locating any surviving members of these men's families. He wanted to share with them some photos of the ceremony which he had found on the NavSource website so that they could know of the honor and dignity with which their loved ones were committed to the deep.

Peter described to Joe the ceremony presided over by the Ship's Chaplain with the band playing the Navy hymn before the bodies were committed to the deep.

Joe first thought was to put Peter in touch with **Robert Harker**, LCI Association member who was Engineering Officer on LCI 474 at the time of the Iwo Jima Invasion. He also suggested to *Elsie Item* editor **John Cummer** that it might be helpful to carry the story in the newsletter.

Because of the poor resolution of the photos it is not possible to print them as large as we would like but, small as they are, they tell the poignant story of the final rites accorded to our shipmates.



USS New York Chaplain leads the burial service.



The bodies are committed to the deep.



Friendly Fire at Pawley Island

By
Robert E. Wright, Jr.

Robert Wright is an active member of the USS LCI Association whose father served aboard LCI's 20, 996, and 997. In pursuing his interest in LCI history he came across information concerning a tragedy in the Peleliu campaign when LCIs were the victim of friendly fire. Here is the result of his research.

I do a lot of research in my job and I am fairly good at it. I often turn my investigations into events that involve the LCI's role in WWII.

A while ago I came across a series of pictures that were unpublished by Life Magazine photographers. Those of you who lived through the War know how important Life magazine was in keeping the people on the home front informed of the important events occurring during the war. Many pictures were taken by Life's photographers; most of them were not published in the magazine.

The only information that was provided for these pictures was a Title: LCI burial at sea, the date was March 1944. I have had these for a while. I tried to figure out some of the details. The LCI Association memorial page didn't list a large number any ship's crew members being killed in action in March of 1944. I tried to call the photographer to see if he could provide any information but he had died many years ago. Eventually I traced his assignments to the South Pacific during 1944 and specifically to Peleliu in February, 1944, and Eniwetok in March of 1944.

The rest of the information is from Samuel E Morrison's *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II, Volume VII; Aleutians Gilberts and Marshalls*.

Pawley Island February 19-23: At 0805 when LCI gunboats were maneuvering near the line of departure, the Marine attack team requested their commanding officer to support the right flank where the heaviest opposition was expected. Lieutenant Commander Blanchard assigned three LCIs, his "most daring ships", to the right flank and the remaining three to the left flank. At 0845 the destroyer *Hailey*, from an area SW of the LCIs. Opened fire on assigned targets near the two beaches. At the same moment the LCIs left the line of departure and preceded the first wave of LVTs toward the beach by about 50 yards. Smoke from the shore bombardment blew down on the boat

waves, limiting visibility to about 400 yards. The LCIs had just opened fire with their 40mm guns when they came under "friendly" fire from *Hailey*. A projectile burst over the LCI-442, killing six men and wounding five. A moment later LCI-441 was hit twice sustaining heavy casualties for so small a vessel - 7 killed and 39 wounded. Before a spotting plane could get word to *Hailey* to cease fire, LCI-365 was hit. (Morrison did not provide information on LCI-365 casualties if any)

From this I would conclude the sailors were from the LCIs 441 or LCI 442. I count 7 which corresponds with the casualty count on the LCI 441.

This is just conjecture at this point.

The pictures are a moving tribute to the men who courageously sailed into battle only to become casualties of circumstances beyond their control.

As a note here, it would appear the LCI 441 was the subject of more battle casualties when it also participated in the pre-invasion UDT reconnaissance mission of February 17, 1945. During that engagement another seven sailors were killed and twenty-one wounded. That brings LCI 441 casualties to fourteen killed and sixty wounded in a period of slightly less than 1 year. The association memorial lists only seven.

There is no other information provided about the pictures.



Tiny Clarkson's Ship's Stores

The Official Site for USS LCI National Association Merchandise

ITEM	ITEM#	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Lifeguard Memorial	1000	\$250.00	_____	_____
Gold Amphib Lapel Pin - 1 inch	1001	\$5.00	_____	_____
Red Amphib. Cloth Patch - 4 inch	1002	\$5.00	_____	_____
LCI Assoc. Cloth Patch - 3 inch	1003	\$5.00	_____	_____
LCI Assoc. Decal - 3 inch	1004	\$1.55	_____	_____
Red Amphib. Lapel Pin - 5/8 inch	1005	\$4.00	_____	_____
Red Amphib. Lapel Pin - 1 inch	1006	\$4.00	_____	_____
US Flag Pin - 1 3/8 inch	1015	\$5.00	_____	_____
Omaha Beach Script Pin	4001	\$4.00	_____	_____
Utah Beach Script Pin	4002	\$4.00	_____	_____
Juno Beach Script Pin	4003	\$4.00	_____	_____
D-Day June 6 1944 Script Pin	4004	\$4.00	_____	_____
Combat Vet Script Pin	4005	\$4.00	_____	_____
Life Member Script Pin	4006	\$4.00	_____	_____
Tote Bag Blue	5001	\$3.00	_____	_____
LCI Assn. Cap Blue Round Con	5002-R	\$15.00	_____	_____
LCI Assn. Cap Blue Square Con	5002-S	\$15.00	_____	_____
Heath's Black Cat Flotilla Book	5008	\$10.00	_____	_____

Order Total:	\$ _____
Add 20% for shipping and packaging:	\$ _____
Total Remittance Enclosed:	\$ _____

Send to: _____ LCI # _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Mail your order to:
AMPHIBIOUS FORCES MEMORIAL MUSEUM
 PO Box 17220
 Portland, Oregon 97217



Pearl Harbor Day LCI Luncheon Dec. 4th

The California annual Pearl Harbor Day luncheon is scheduled for December 4th, 11:30 AM at Hunter's Steakhouse in Oceanside, CA. Any LCI sailor or relative from other states who might be in California on that date is welcome.

If you have friends who served on LSTs, LSMs, or other amphibious craft, invite them. Any of that rare breed of sailors that purposely ran their ships aground, repeatedly, is welcome.

Let me know if you are interested, and later in the year I will send you a flyer with all the information. Join us. Mark your calendars. It's a good time.

Contact:

Joe Flynn,

California Director

627 Bradford Rd., El Cajon, CA 92019

Telephone: 619-588-7078

Email: joeglo@msn.com



Your Officers and Board of Directors

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

OFFICERS:

James E. Talbert

Chairman of the Board
LCI 618
12238 Woodland Trail
Council Bluffs IA 51503
(712)366-1094

John P. Cummer

President
LCI 502
302 Pinewood Cottage Lane,
Blythewood, SC 29016
(803)714-9098

John France

Vice President
11621 Copper Springs Trail
Oro Valley, AZ 85737
(520)429-3792
Lci540@aol.com

Hal Bleyhl

Treasurer
LCI(L) 812
10418 Campville St.
Boise, ID 83709
(208)639-9180

Steven Dudrow

Secretary
418 Cervina Drive North
Venice, FL 34285
(941)416-0717
stevedudrow@comcast.net

Rev. David Cox

Chaplain
(LCI 633)
413 Tupilo Way NW
Birmingham, AL 35215
(205) 854 -5229
swabby1@bellsouth.net

Rev. Michael Gatton

Chaplain
6410 Gellhaus Lane
Louisville, KY 40299
502/762-0613
mgatton@insightbb.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Aydelotte

(LCI 25)
3710 Goldfield Road #425
Apache Junction, AZ
(480-671-2425)
Jj10723@aol.com

Gordon Smith

LCI(L) 43
2313 Northeast 110th Avenue
Vancouver, WA 98684
(360)256-5901
SmittyLci43@q.com

Joe Flynn

627 Bradford Road
El Cajon, CA 92019
(619)588-7078
joeglo@msn.com

DIRECTORS EMERITUS:

Connie R. Mulherin

LCI(G)561
1520 Sea Gull Drive
Titusville, FL 32796
(321)268-1713
cmulherin1@cfl.rr.com

Rod Scurlock

(LCI 565)
4445 Mustang Drive
Boise, Idaho 83709
(208) 362-4447
rhscurlock@yahoo.com

Bob McLain

LCI 436)
1829 Hemlock Road
Lancaster, PA 17603-4437
(717)392-4558
maxeyusn@comcast.net

HISTORIANS:

John France,

European Theater of Operations
11621 Copper Springs Trail
Oro Valley, AZ 85737
(520)429-3792
Lci540@aol.com

Dennis Blocker

Pacific Theater of Operations
2847 Cedar Plain
San Antonio, TX 78245
(210)673-8854
lci449@hotmail.com

OFFICES AND SUPPORT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY

NEHEMIAH COMMUNICATIONS, INC

101 Rice Bent Way, # 6, Columbia, SC 29229



USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

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

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

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

I. For application if you served on an LCI:

Name _____

Which LCI did you serve on? _____ What was your Rank/Rate? _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Phone #: _____/ _____

E-mail address: _____

Occupation or Former Occupation: _____

Wife's Name _____

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

Name _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Phone #: _____/ _____

Are you related to someone who served on an LCI? Yes No

If so, what is the relationship? (i.e. father, grandfather, uncle, etc) _____

What is/was his name? _____

On which LCI did he serve? _____

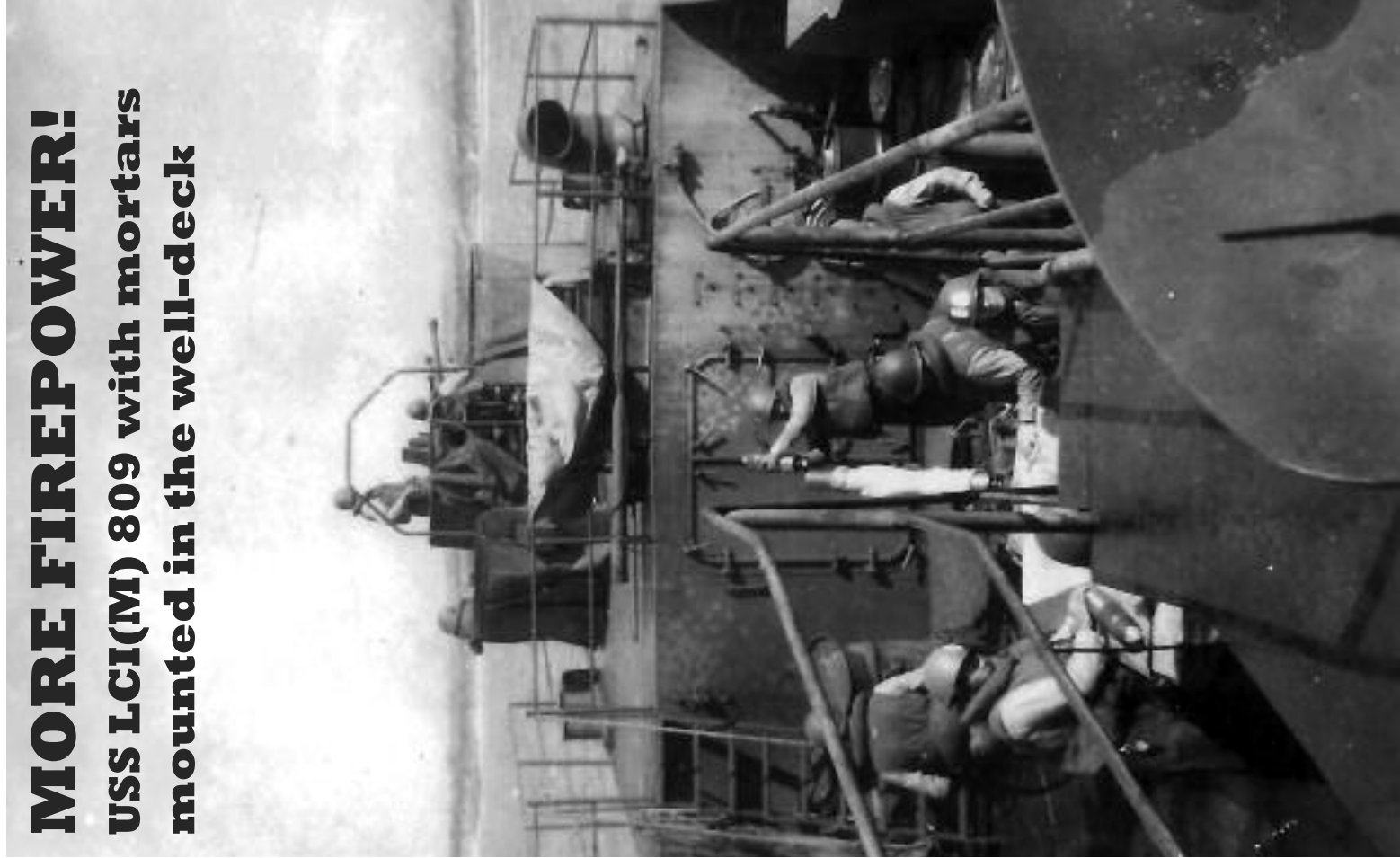
Have you served in the U.S. military? Yes No If so, what branch? _____

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

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



MORE FIREPOWER! **USS LCI(M) 809 with mortars** **mounted in the well-deck**



USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.
c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc.
101 Rice Bent Way, #6
Columbia, SC 29229



NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBIA, SC
PERMIT NO.