



Elsie Item

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

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ISSUE 80

DECEMBER 2012



**The Citadel Color Guard presents the
colors at our Charleston Reunion**

A Word from the President/Editor

I need to begin with an apology to you for the lateness of this issue. It should have been out in October, but a series of events and concerns got in my way a bit more than usual this time. Thank you for your patience. I'll try to do better next time.

It's been a time when, with input from many of you, the Board has been wrestling with questions concerning the future of our association. Within the next two years we want to see the leadership transition to those of you who did not serve in LCIs during WWII, but, who, by their numbers and enthusiasm, promise a bright and strengthened association molded to serve their interests. No doubt many of our "old timers" will be with us for many years, but remembering the LCI legacy certainly lies with this next generation.

The Transition Task Force

Between now and our next reunion, which will be scheduled for the fall of 2013, a **Transition Task Force [TTF]**, made up of our younger generation members already serving in leadership roles will be activated. The role of this TTF will be, first of all, to nominate from their ranks the persons they want to move into the office of President and Vice President. These nominees would take over at the Branson reunion and I, as outgoing President, would move into an advisory role for the new President for the following year. **John France**, our present Vice President could advise himself! The office of Treasurer, currently held by **Hal Bleyhl**, is an appointed office, so the TTF could do the appointing. Hal would continue in an advisory capacity for the following year.

The other role of the TTF would be to think through and plan any changes they think should be made. They would deal with such questions as:

- Do we want to continue with annual reunions?
- Should *Elsie Item* continue in print format or move to an electronic publication?
- Should the web page be continued as is or are there changes that should be made?
- What does the financial future look like? Do we need to change our dues structure?

These questions listed are not exhaustive but illustrative. The results of their deliberation could then be presented at the time of the Branson reunion in the Fall of 2013.

Parting Ways with the LSM/LSMR Association.

Issues concerning the time and place of future reunions with the officers of the LSM/LSMR Association were such that, reluctantly, it was decided that we should go our separate ways in the future. We will try as hard as we can to promote attendance at future reunions to make up for the loss in numbers as a result of this separation.

Planning for Two Years

After extensive discussion, The Board of Directors has decided to plan for the next two reunions and, in the process, make a decision about any future reunions after 2014. Consequently, the plan will be to hold our next reunion in the

fall of 2013 in Branson, Missouri, and, what could be our last reunion, in the spring of 2013 in Portland, Oregon with the USS LCI(L) 713 once more being the chief attraction.

Branson was decided upon because of the wonderful hospitality to Veterans that city offers and because of its more central location.

Why Portland? As you will read elsewhere in this issue, the hard-working volunteers of the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum have made great progress in the restoration of the 713. Setting our reunion for the spring of 2014 would give them incentive to have it in an even more pristine condition by that time, possibly even with engines re-installed. If, indeed, it is our last reunion, the opportunity to once more tread the steel decks of the ship would be a great last memory.

Dates for both of these reunions will be announced in the near future.

Other news

We urge you to read this issue carefully as it contains important news about several items of interest, i.e., the article on the donation of our archives to the Admiral Nimitz Museum of the Pacific and the significant progress being made on the restoration of the 713 in Portland.

Any more Sea Stories?

We're always on the lookout for more sea stories to share, so if you have one, send it in and we'll be glad to consider it for a future issue. Share your personal legacy!

-John Cummer

"THE ELSIE ITEM"

NUMBER 80, December 2012

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The Charleston Reunion!

*See more photos of
the reunion – page 25*

*The USS Lexington at
Patriots Point*

*Hal Bleyhl and John
Cummer get ready for
the banquet*

*The only
way to see
Charleston!*

Historic Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor

The Charleston Reunion: Another Great One

Historic Charleston provided a great venue for the 114 LCLers and 126 LSMers who gathered September 10-13 for our 2012 reunion. A fine hotel and the city's renowned hospitality were enjoyed as old shipmates enjoyed each other's company and reminisced about their past exploits.

An informal reception on Monday, September 10th started the festivities as old shipmates and their friends and families greeted each other. On Tuesday the group enjoyed a bus tour of the city where history seemed to greet the visitors on every corner. From the Military College of South Carolina, better known as The Citadel, to the Battery where the opening shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter, the tour concluded with a stop for lunch at the City Market, which has been in continuous operation since the 1700s. Here we had our first opportunity to enjoy the famed cuisine of Charleston. Many, for the first time, learned how good such delicacies as she-crab soup, crab cakes, shrimp and grits were.

An evening cruise aboard the *Spirit of Carolina* provided another opportunity to enjoy that wonderful food while enjoying the sights of Charleston's harbor. As the sun set, the cruise vessel circled historic Fort Sumter where the Civil War began.

Yet another opportunity for sight-seeing and good food came on Wednesday when the LCLers enjoyed a tour of Patriot's Point, home of the largest naval and maritime museum in the world. Aboard the USS Yorktown, famed WWII aircraft carrier, the sight-seers saw war planes used during wars and conflicts spanning from WWII to Operation Desert Storm. Of special interest was the official Medal of Honor Society Museum. Information and photos of all



Medal of Honor winners is available there. An inquiry at the desk brought out the citation and photo of LT Rufus G.Herring, CO of USS LCI(G)449 during the pre-invasion attack on Iwo Jima, February 17, 1945.

Following the tour of Patriot's Point the group had lunch at the Charleston Crab House, yet another memorable gustatory experience!

Thursday the reunioners took part in the annual business meeting, memorial service and, as a culmination of another great reunion, enjoyed a sumptuous banquet. You will read accounts of each of these events elsewhere in this issue. You'll read more details about each of these activities elsewhere in this issue.

The old cliché was true once more: "A great time was had by all!"

Royal Wetzel Enjoys the Reunion!

By
Joe Flynn

All hands had a good time at our Charleston reunion, but if a prize were to be awarded for the LCI Sailor having the most fun, **Royal Wetzel**, cook of the LCI 70 would have won hands down!

Roy shared the fun by distributing Kazoos and recruiting a Kazoo Marching Band. He also brought with him some Pennsylvania sausage, cheese and crackers. Once a cook always a cook and Royal can't stand to see anyone go hungry. And in the most fun category, there was a three-way tie for second place shared by the **Wright** brothers; **Bill**, **Richard**, and **Robert Jr.**

The Kazoo players entertained in the Hospitality Room, the Lobby, and with the music and entertainment that followed the Banquet.

While the Association does not award a prize for having the most fun, Royal did receive a prize at the Banquet -- he won the LSM-LSMR 50-50 drawing. He was a winner all the way around and is already planning for next year.



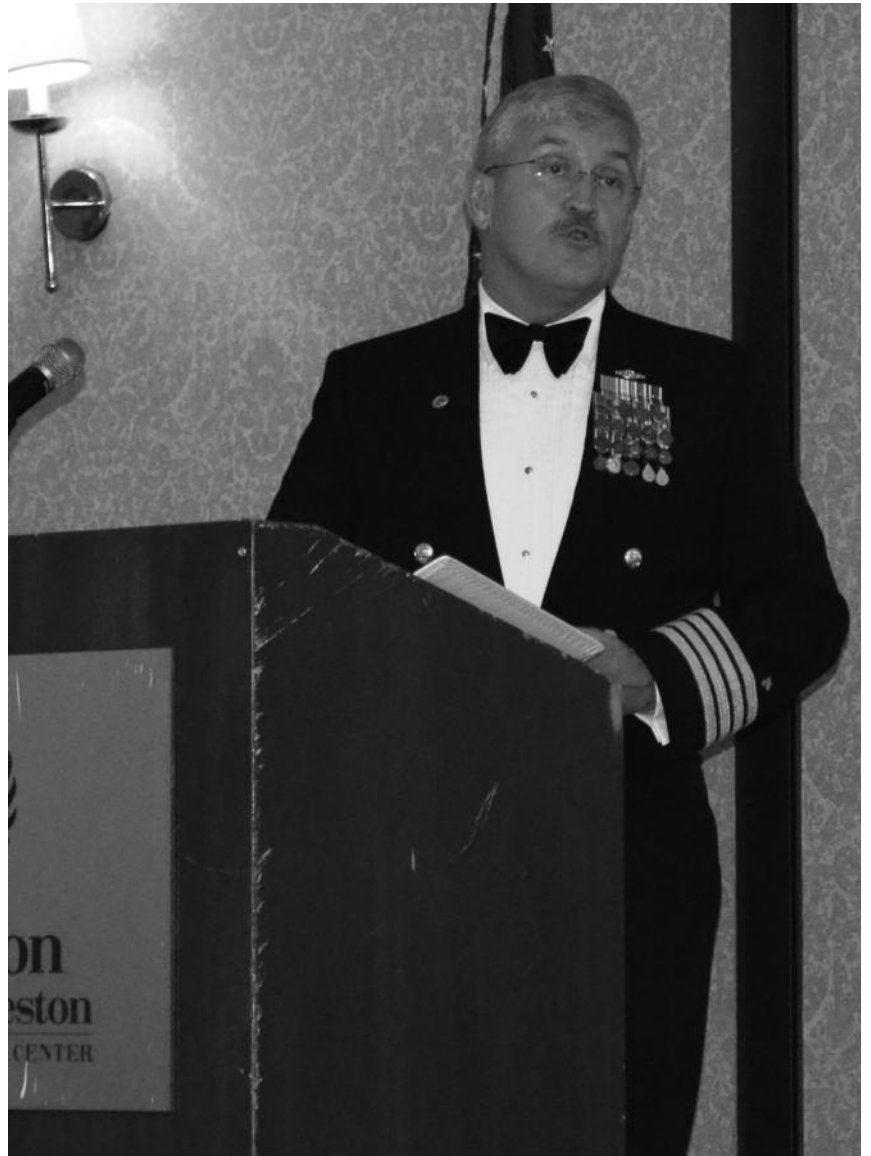
Roy Wins the LSM "50-50" Raffle

CAPT, Chaplain, Michael Langston Addresses Banquet

Featured speaker at the LCI Reunion Banquet was recently retired **Captain, Chaplain, Michael W. Langston**, whose last Navy assignment was Commanding Officer of the Navy Chaplaincy School and Center at Fort Jackson, Columbia, SC, where the chaplaincy training programs for all U.S. Military Services were recently combined.

A former line officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, Captain Langston resigned in 1983 to pursue studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. After pastoring a church in Brevard, NC, he was recalled to active duty from the Navy Reserve as a Chaplain. During his career as a Navy Chaplain, he served with units in Operation Desert Storm and as Force Chaplain for II Marine Expeditionary Force in Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

For his LCI audience, Chaplain Langston recounted some of his experiences in amphibious warfare during his service with the Marines. He commended LCI Veterans for their service and urged them to “finish well” during their senior years.



Having met Chaplain Langston at a meeting of men of the church, President **John Cummer** invited him to speak at the LCI banquet, feeling he had much to share with that audience. Chaplain Langston is now serving as Professor of Chaplaincy at Columbia International University in Columbia, SC.

LCI Association Archives to be donated to the National Museum of the Pacific War

Through the efforts of **Dennis Blocker**, our historian for the Pacific Theater of War, and with the approval of the Board of the USS LCI National Association, arrangements have been made to have the **National Museum of the Pacific War** and the **Admiral Nimitz Foundation** to be the recipients of our Association's Archives. This collection includes hundreds of documents and photographs that Dennis has collected and cataloged. At the museum they will be cared for by professional archivists and will be available to the public as well as to scholars doing research.

A special presentation is being planned for March 9, 2013, and it is hoped that as many LCI Veterans as possible will be able to attend. The museum is located in Fredericksburg, Texas, 70 miles from San Antonio, where Dennis lives, making it very convenient for him to continue working with the collection.

Fredericksburg was the home of famed WWII Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and so focuses on the war in the Pacific, but the archivists have said they will be delighted to also house and service our materials dealing with the European Theater of Operations.



Nimitz Museum issues Press Release on Donation of LCI Archives

The following press release has been prepared to publicize the donation of the LCI Archives to the museum:

“USS Landing Craft Infantry Association to Donate Archives to the National Museum of the Pacific War

“The USS Landing Craft Infantry National Association has chosen the National Museum of the Pacific War and the Admiral Nimitz Foundation as the recipients of their entire achieve collection. There are hundreds of Action Reports and War Diaries from the invasions of D-Day on Omaha Beach to Salerno, Sicily, Anzio, Tunisia, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Tinian, New Guinea, Philippines, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, Okinawa and various other places from Alaska to Australia and all places in between. The archives also hold over 1,000 photos of the LCI, some scanned from the National Achieves.

“The National Museum of the Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, Texas will accept the donation at a special program scheduled for March 9, 2013 starting at 1:30 pm in the Ballroom of the Nimitz Hotel. This program will be open to the public and all are invited to attend and take part in this historic event. The program will have presentations delivered by members of the LCI Association, LCI veterans, John Cummer and Larry Hermes, and LCI National Association Board Member Dennis Blocker, grandson of a WWII LCI veteran.

“What is an LCI? “Landing Craft Infantry were and are ships designed to deliver fighting troops to a beach quickly. WWII LCIs had a crew of 24-60 sailors and carried 200 soldiers, who descended from ramps on each side of the craft. They weren't designed cross-ocean travel -- yet given the urgency of wartime, they did just that, sailing from the United States to the European and Pacific Theatres. Their flat-bottom hulls were designed for beaching, which meant you felt every wave and more than one sailor and soldier ended up donating his lunch to the sea on a continuous basis.

“For more information on the National Museum of the Pacific visit www.pacificwarmuseum.org or call (830)-997-8600.

“The National Museum of the Pacific War is a Texas Historical Commission property supported, operated, and managed by the Admiral Nimitz Foundation.”



You can have a Part in Establishing the LCI Archives at the Nimitz Museum!

Pacific War Historian **Dennis Blocker** is working on a project which will add greatly to the presence of the LCI Archives at the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War. He is culling through the hundreds of LCI photos he has collected from the National Archives and elsewhere to pick out what he considers to be the best one hundred of them. His aim is to have a display of these pictures, suitably mounted for display in the museum.. Dennis says, "On the back of each print I will acknowledge the family or individual who will donate \$5.00 to this project. The label will say, for example,

"This print is made possible by a donation from the _____ family in honor of their (father/grandfather, etc.) who served on LCI _____ during World War II."

Or

"This print is made possible by a donation from _____ who served aboard LCI _____ during World War II

Dennis will search to see if there is a picture of the LCI on which the person served and, if there is one, will use that print for that individual. If none is available, the label will be placed on another photo. The photos will be 8½ by 11," black and white, professionally mounted

If you are interested, please contact Dennis.

Dennis Blocker

6138 Border Trail,

San Antonio, TX 78240

Telephone: 210/396-8872

Email: lci449@yahoo.com



A Selection of Pictures from the LCI Archives

To give you an idea of the kind of pictures that have been collected into our archives, here are some that we thought you might enjoy seeing. *(Photos continue on the following two pages.)*



LCI 618. This picture was taken after the war was over as U.S. Marines moved to secure positions of importance in Tientsin, China. Crowds of Chinese push and shove to catch a glimpse of the American ship with U.S. Marines.

Normandy Beach. A haunting picture taken from a German artillery bunker. Looking straight down the barrel, you will see the unmistakable silhouette of an LCI.





LCI(G) 69. LT9jg) Homer Rosetti (wearing helmet) treats leg wounds on one of his crew. Notice the tourniquet which has been applied to the man's thigh to stem the flow of blood.

LCI 775. The crew work against the elements to pry LCI 775 off the beach at Point Hueneme, California 21 Nov. 1944.



New Guinea Overview Shot. A U.S. Plane gets a great shot of US troops debarking LCIs during the invasion of Morotai. Note the clouds of muddy water being kicked up by the troops as they trudge toward shore.



Great Progress in the Restoration of the 713!



LCI 713 at the Portland Reunion, 2004

The 713 looked great when we first saw her at the 2004 reunion, better still when we saw her again at our 2009 reunion and will look even better when we see her in 2014! From a rusty hulk that had sat on the bottom of the river for years she has, by the dedication and hard labor of a crew of volunteers, made great progress in being restored to her pristine WWII shape and appearance.

The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum's restoration crew, under the leadership of their President, **Rick Holmes** and Chairman of the Board, **Gordon Smith**, has been responsible for significant improvements during the past year. As the restoration work continues there is more and more evidence of the growing sophistication of the organization. With a membership of over 400, the museum is now debt free and, as President Holmes puts it "...in firm control of our own destiny." After some legal difficulties with the previous owner, AFFM is now sole owner of the 713.

The 713 was saved from possible serious damage by a fortuitous decision to change her mooring. Shortly after the move to a new location on nearby Hayden Island, a fire destroyed the Thunderbird Inn where she was moored. The entire motel, which was vacant and had been on the market, was totally destroyed by the fire that took two days to extinguish. Though less accessible now, she is conveniently located near repair facilities and arrangements have been made for visitors to reach her by boat. Rick Holmes reports that they have several excellent prospects for a new permanent home which they hope to secure over the next year or so. This could mean that the ship would be much

more accessible when we have our 2014 reunion there.

Another mark of progress is the introduction of a quarterly newsletter published on the network but also available in hard copy for those without computer access. This newsletter is available on the museum's website www.amphibiousforces.org.

The list of restoration work done during the past year is impressive. Due to environmental restrictions, the crew has been restricted to doing job mostly inside the ship, but, as Rick reports "that still leaves a whole host of things to do! They have lagged and painted overheads and bulkheads of all interior spaces; repaired the after steering escape hatch (which has not been operable for several years); installed of a fire pump and fire main system; made troop compartment 2 into a museum display area; restored the small arms locker in the passageway by the officer's head and a gunner's tool cabinet in the foc'sle; and, perhaps most impressive, have obtained deck winches for the well deck and the fantail. Master Mechanic **Woody Woodruff** has both winches in running order. Main engines, previously obtained but not yet installed, are also in running conditions.

The ship is in need of extensive bottom repairs but, as soon as funds are available, the steel, which has already been purchased for the job will be installed. When that is accomplished and the engines installed, the 713 will be able to get underway on her own power. That very well could be in time for our 2014 reunion!

Perhaps the most significant challenge for these dedicated restoration workers is fund raising. A professional fund raiser and grant proposal writer will be hired to get help with the larger restoration projects, but the gifts of individuals, such as LCers, are important because grants most often require matching funds.

One way in which LCers and their friends and family could help meet these financial needs would be to participate in the Life Jacket Memorial Program. For a \$250 donation, AFFM will permanently mount an authentic Navy issue kapok life jacket with steel brackets to the overhead in compartments throughout the ship, including crew's mess, officer's staterooms, the wardroom, crews quarters, and troop compartments. A gold aluminum plate mounted on an oak or mahogany strip bearing the donor's name and up to three lines of text will be attached to the brackets to hold the life jacket. This method of storage will be just as it was during WWII. You may contact AFFM on their website for more information on this program.

"Our end goal," says President Holmes, "is a fully operational ship and we have plans in place to make it happen. But we will need help. Larger projects require larger grants which in turn require matching funds, so if anyone in the USS LCI National Association, has foundation, corporate or other contacts, we ask that you please consider recommending the AFFM."

Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum to have direct access to all documents and photos; also chosen to receive Physical Memorabilia.

The Directors of the Armed Forces Memorial Museum, home of USS LCI 713, have indicated that they would like direct access to the documents and photos going to the National Museum of the Pacific. Accordingly, Dennis Blocker is supplying them with electronic copy of all material being given to the National Museum of the Pacific.

Additionally, the Board of Directors has designated the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum as the recipient of all physical memorabilia associated with LCIs. Space aboard the 713 as well as at other places to which AFFM might expand will provide excellent display space.

Sweetgrass Baskets and Shipmates



(Editor's Note: Each year Chaplain Mike Gatton selects some feature from the local culture where our reunion is being held and uses it as a theme for his remarks at our memorial service. In Portland, it was a rose for their Rose Festival; in Cincinnati it was stones representing the seven hills upon which the city was built; in Nashville, it was a guitar for that city's country music tradition. This year he chose sweetgrass baskets, a low country South Carolina art form. We want to share what Mike said with you who were unable to be there.)

(As requested by so many of those present at this year's Memorial Service in Charleston, it is my honor to share these thoughts in memory of shipmates and friends.)

You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For "all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures forever."

—1 PETER 1: 23-25

Charleston sweetgrass baskets date back over 300 years. The tradition was brought here by slaves from the West African Rice Coast and is an important craft and art form to the Gullah people of Charleston. The Gullahs are proud descendants of those slaves. Since this year's LCI Reunion was held in Charleston, South Carolina—the Low Country and home of the Gullahs—it is only fitting that their culture be used to remind us of departed shipmates.

Sweetgrass is a grass that grows in the space between land and sea—the very place where LCI sailors served their country. It serves to link one element to another—a living connection between earth and water. Standing on separate shores, we, the living, are always seeking unity between life here and life eternal. Since sweetgrass grows on the Carolina coast as well as the shores of Africa, it was a welcome cultural connection to the slaves' homeland and a reinforcement of their faith in the God of their salvation. Sweetgrass connects us as an LCI family and reinforces our faith in God.

Because the grasses used in the baskets are from swamps and marsh area, water will not hurt them. They are resilient. We pay tribute to a generation born during a Great Depression, tempered by a World War, nurtured by hard work, challenged by a changing nation, and slowed by failing bodies, but whose spirit lives on. They are resilient. Because of their faith and ours, not even death can have the final say.



A Gullah sweetgrass weaver demonstrates her art at our memorial service.

Sweetgrass baskets are woven in coils and use whatever resource is at hand—sweetgrass, bulrush, pine nettles—there is nothing wasted. The beauty of their design is found in the variety of their materials. This generation used what they had at hand. They found a way to do more with less. They taught us about teamwork—that together we are stronger than we could ever be apart. We give God thanks for their strength which is woven into our lives.

Baskets originally were made as tools for winnowing and hauling rice and other products. After the 1890s, sweetgrass baskets began to evolve from agricultural implements to household items. From humble beginnings this generation worked to protect and build a nation. They won a war then came home to start careers and raise families. We are who we are because they were who they were.

Each sweetgrass piece is unique, and each artist develops his or her own style. Baskets require a great deal of patience and creativity, as there are no set patterns. In the same way, there is no set pattern in human personalities—each person is unique—each has his or her own style. As each blade of this grass is the same yet different, so we celebrate experiences shared and remember what made each of these men special.

Basket making is learned from childhood and is handed down from generation to generation. We are thankful for the commitment to God, family, and country exemplified by these men. They taught us about duty and honor and personal responsibility. We are forever grateful for examples set and lessons learned.

Sweetgrass is temporal—it sprouts and grows and dies. But, basket sewing is a way of making what is here today, but gone tomorrow into something eternal. The basket is a gift from God as are these friends we remember today. People die—love is eternal. Crafted by the hands of our Creator, we treasure their time among us. Each of these friends and shipmates we celebrate as a gift from God. They belong to God today.

Agape, Mike



*Sweetgrass baskets
are an art, not a craft!*

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.”*



We honor here those shipmates who have
passed on since the publication of our last issue:

LCI 43
Fred Cacici

LCI 70
Harold Cronin

LCI 407
Lewis “Chick” Mason

LCI 450
Vaughn Hampton

LCI 710
Frank J. Ruxlow, Jr.

LCI 1062
Clyde Allen

John France Trains the Kenya Wildlife Service Patrol!

LCI Association Vice President **John France** has recently returned home after three months in Kenya training their Wildlife Service Patrol. The son of LCler **Frank France**, who served on LCI 540, John came out of his retirement as a supervisor in the U.S. Border Patrol, to take on this assignment at the request of the government of Kenya.

Though John had plenty of experience in “chasing bad guys around the Arizona desert”, as he put it, he experienced some new challenges in Kenya. John emailed, “The firing of blanks through rifles to chase away the elephants is a nightly ritual that you can almost set your watch by.”

At night John had to walk a couple of hundred yards back to his little house with his flashlight and “It is amazing how an elephant can get within fifteen yards of you at night without you seeing it” he said.

John reports that he had a great time during this assignment, but is now glad to be back “in the good old USA!”



USS LCI(G) 821: First into Secret Japanese Harbor

By A.A. Mayer, Quartermaster 3/C.

One of the most difficult assignments given to LCI Gunboats was picket duty in the Palau Islands. The famous "Black Cat Flotilla", Flotilla 13, was assigned the role of preventing the infiltration of Japanese troops from the north and, as such, they were the target of innumerable suicide swimmer and boat attacks. In September, 1945, USS LCI(L) 821 was ordered to enter Malakal, a former secret Japanese harbor. As such they were the first U. S. Navy ship to enter this anchorage. This account was carried in the history of USS LCI(G) 821, assembled by Ronald L. Risch, son of Wilbert "Johnny" Risch who served as a Gunner's Mate aboard the 821.

Shortly after the surrender of Malakal, Our LCI(G) was standing about two thousand yards off the entrance of Malakal Harbor when the skipper said, "Let's go. Left full rudder!" The ship swung slowly around and so began the first American ship's passage into the secret harbor of the Japanese stronghold in the Palau Islands.

As the ship's head steadied down on course, I could feel a certain tenseness in the atmosphere on 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.

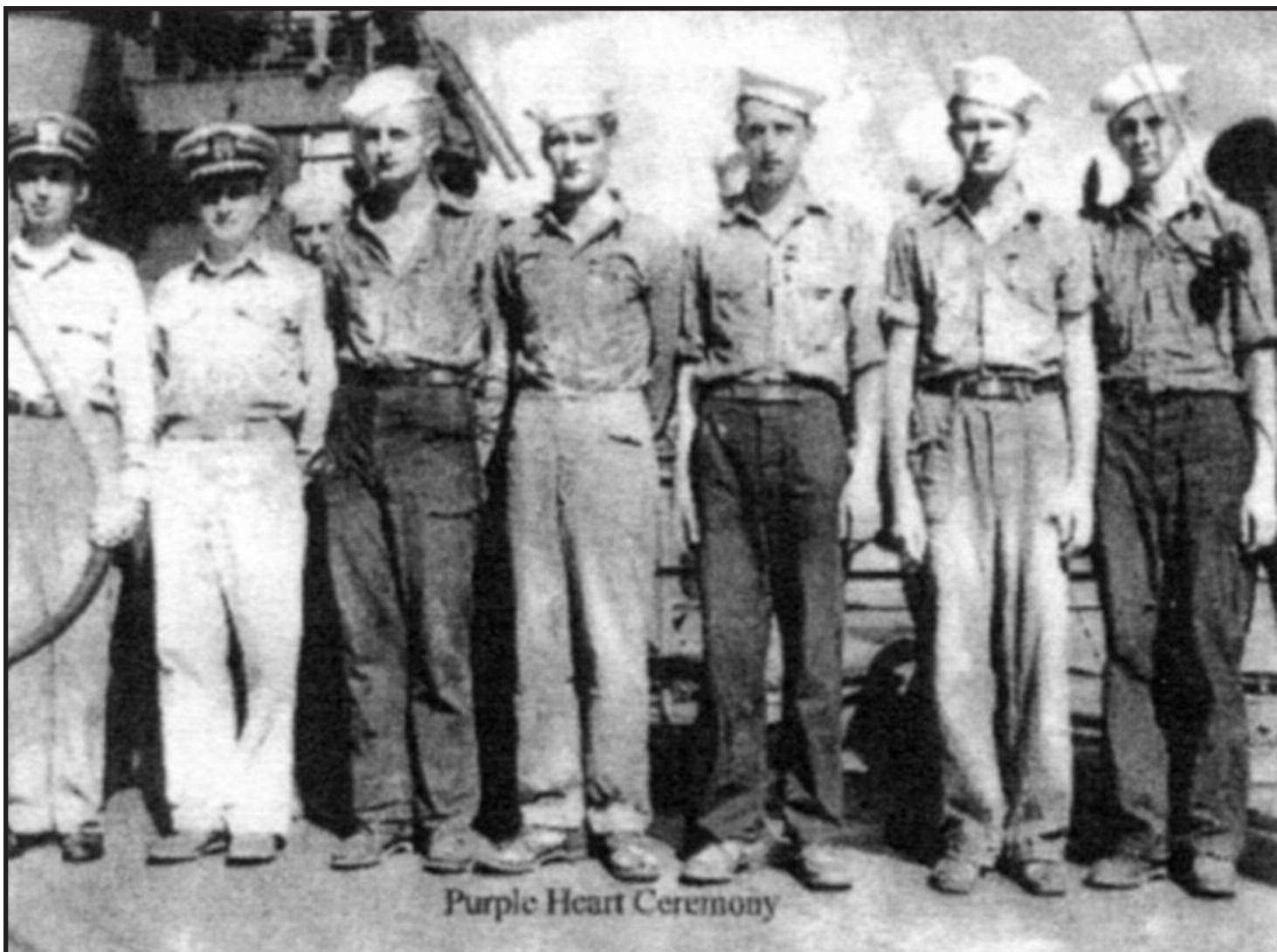
We moved in slowly, hugging the north side of the entrance channel with the steep cliffs of Malakal Island hovering over us. Yes, there were mines, plenty of them. The Japanese Naval Officer in charge of Malakal Harbor had come aboard from a Daihutsu and had given us valuable information concerning these mines, but as to where they were in the channel, he was not certain.

The ship edged forward and rounded the tip of Ngarroll Island into the harbor. Through a fine drizzle of rain we had our first good view of the once thriving secret harbor. Fortunately, the water was 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 which afforded ample protection from the heavy seasonal winds and seas of this area. The results of our carrier strikes was to make it a graveyard of ships both small and large. Some were completely out of the water, but still resting on the bottom, while others were completely submerged. Occasionally we saw a lone mast or two which would serve 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 ahead we began observing docks, emplacements, and once prosperous 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 my eye I could see **Commander Brown** and Captain Roberts talking. The next order, casually given, was one for history for the 730. It was, "Special Sea Detail". Then through megaphones on the bridge came shouts to all



Seaman First Class Johnny Risch (fourth from the left) stands between his mates on number three gun, Buddy and Earl Tennermann to receive Purple Heart medals at a ceremony aboard LCI(L) 821, 4 August 1945. These men were wounded in action on 7 May 1945 at Palau Islands while defending one of the picket lines against infiltration by the Japanese.

the crew, "Port Side to". That meant one thing; we were going to dock. Our men jumped to the dock immediately upon coming close enough to handle their own lines. They were probably the first Americans to set foot on Malakal Island.

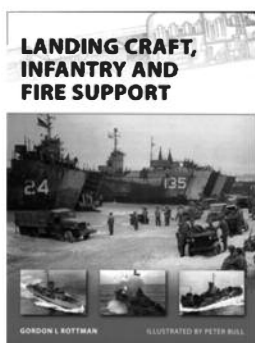
With the ship secured all had to go ashore and see what it had to offer. **Elsie** and **Midnight**, Flotilla Ship's mascots, were bouncing through the grass before anyone else thought of leaving the ship. We observed ruined machinery, bomb pits, scattered debris, and strafed oil drums. A few Japanese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

Our Ensign and our Flotilla Flag proudly flew from the mast. All three absentee pennants were immediately blocked. Flotilla Thirteen had taken over Malakal. The Japanese were no longer in charge. America was the Victor!

The entrance of LCI Gunboat 730 into Malakal was the crowning climax to a whole year of the steady, monotonous work of picket and patrol duty by LCI(L) Flotilla Thirteen.

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, show power and put democracy upon the seas.

Your USS LCI Association Needs Your Support



New Item

A pledge of \$20.00 to the USS LCI National Association

Will bring a copy of the Book **Landing Craft Infantry and Fire Support** by Gordon Rottman. This book contains one of the best histories of the development and the deployment of the LCI in WWII

A pledge of \$25.00 to the USS LCI National Association

You can choose between 2 LCI Ball Caps.

Style 1 WWII The newest style lets everyone know that you are a proud member of the USS LCI National Association who served during World War II. A silhouette of an LCI is surrounded by the stars and stripes form the letters WWII

Style 2 Stars and Stripes embroidered with your choice of the Navy or Coast Guard LCI Association emblem.



New Item



A pledge of \$50.00 to the USS LCI National Association

You will be rewarded with this new style polo shirt which includes your choice of our Navy or Coast Guard LCI Association emblem. Colors: White or Navy

A Pledge of \$100.00

to the USS LCI National Association today you will be rewarded with this Fully lined Light Weight Jacket with your choice of our Navy or Coast Guard LCI Association emblem. Colors: Khaki or Navy



WRIGHT
USS LCI (L) 996

For \$10 your Name and Ship are embroidered on the right chest of the Jacket (see picture)

Thank You for Supporting the USS LCI National Association!

Mail This Form with Your Check to:
USS LCI National Association
101 Rice Bent Way # 6
Columbia, S.C., 29229



Additional Information Contact:
Robert Wright (517) 548-1026

Member Name _____ USS LCI (____) _____
Member Phone Number _____
Member Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

\$ 20 Donation Book Landing Craft infantry and Fire Support

Amount Paid: \$ _____

\$ 25 Donation LCI Association Cap WWII _____

add \$6 shipping = **\$31**

or

\$ 25 Donation LCI Association Cap Stars and Stripes _____

add \$6 shipping = **\$31**

Service Branch: Navy _____ Coast Guard _____

Amount Paid: \$ _____

\$ 50 Donation LCI Association Polo Shirt

add \$6 shipping = **\$56**

Service Branch: Navy _____ Coast Guard _____

Shirt Color: Navy _____ White _____

Size: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL _____

Amount Paid: \$ _____

\$ 100 Donation LCI Association Jacket

add \$12 shipping = **\$112**

Add Name _____ Embroider Last Name and Ship Number on Jacket

add \$ 10 = **\$122**

Service Branch: Navy _____ Coast Guard _____

Jacket Color: Navy _____ Khaki _____

Size: S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL _____

Total Paid: \$ _____

(Allow us 3 weeks to Produce and Deliver your order to you)

USS LCI National Association, 101 Rice Bent Way, Columbia, SC 29229; (803) 865-5665

Can You Top this Sea Story?

A memorable anecdote from William H. McCracken. USS LCI(R) 1030

Somewhere, out there, we know that there are dozens of great sea stories that have never been published, here or elsewhere. We dug this one out of the first volume of our history published by Turner Company as a challenge to all you old salts. Can you top this? If so, send it in so we can share it with all our shipmates!

L CIs in World War II were unfortunately doomed to bear the cross of procuring, often begging, survival supplies and nourishment from any nearby larger naval vessel, frequently cargo AGCs: engine parts, ammunition, toilet paper, fuel oil, meat, two-year old eggs, beer. LCI survival was frequently supported by negotiated barter exchanges among sister ships, involving unexplainable excess ten year inventories of, say, frozen chicken feet and rustproofing paint that no one wanted to put on anyway.

Beer, in the U. S. Navy Pacific Theater, was carefully controlled, protected, guarded, regulated, preserved and rationed by the big ships and, despite its tremendous role as a morale-builder, in the end the LCIs – at the bottom of the totem pole – got like nothing.

Once upon a time, in July, 1945, six months dry and very, very thirsty, two successful invasions under their belt, now in Buckner Bay amid the Kamikazes at Okinawa, a compassionate AGS Executive Officer grudgingly let the LCI(R) 1030 have two cases of beer. What may have been contributed in exchange by the 1030 was undoubtedly priceless, very important, and cannot be discussed here in writing.

Unfortunately, the LCI's homemade 10 foot dinghy with oars, temporarily powered by the ship's borrowed washing machine motor, capsized bottoms up while loading alongside the AGC. Everything and everybody went into the water immediately losing all supplies except for one case of beer tightly gripped with a stranglehold between my legs, all the while bobbing up and down in six foot waves and trying to retrieve and hang on to my cap. The two accompanying 1030 Machinist Mates lost their fuel injectors, their enthusiasm and their sense of humor.

The kind, good-hearted AGS promptly replaced each lost supply item, except the lost case of beer. So, back at the ship, with the entire crew lined up on the railing as a welcoming committee, I thought "How do you divide up 24 bottles of beer among 36 sailors who haven't had a drop since Pearl Harbor six months ago?" For my efforts, this conscientious, well-intentioned Supply Officer was almost lynched in effigy.

Four months later in Sasebo, Kyushu, Japan, the war won and a typhoon successfully fought, a newly-arrived AGC responded to the humble request for essential survival commodities and beer by asking, "How much do you want?" One hour and a borrowed LCVP later, we heroes re-boarded good old LCI (R) 1931 with 240 cases of the stuff!

We partook and quenched our thirst prudently and respectfully for three days, even saving some for the slow journey back to San Diego through Saipan and Pearl Harbor. Although tightly secured in the aft ammunition locker, some of it, somehow, sort of evaporated or something during the return journey. In any event, ship's morale reached new heights in Sasebo, and the war could easily have been won again. The Supply Officer was subsequently and unanimously awarded the Distinguished and Malted Order of Outstanding Achievement in the field of Vessel Morale and Well-Being.

Nothing since has been so satisfying!



The Charleston Reunion in Pictures



Historic downtown Charleston



Chaplin Mike Gatton presides at the memorial service



Gordon Smith is honored for his long service to the LCI Association and the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum



John Cummer, Penni Breivik and Robert Wright enjoy a few minutes before the banquet

USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Our membership is open to anyone who served in Landing Craft, Infantry, during WWII or anyone else interested in our small ships and the men who served aboard them.

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.

I. For application as a LCI Veteran:

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 as a Relative or Interested Person:

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? _____

(If unknown or if you do not have a relative who served on an LCI, leave blank)

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

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c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc.
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General MacArthur wades ashore at Morotai, New Guinea, accompanied by Admiral "Amphibious Dan" Barbey. Note LCIs in background.