

November 2016



Elsie Item

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

Established May 14-18, 1991, Norfolk, VA



LCI Reunion 2016 New Orleans



Tours Sightseeing Steamboat Cruise And Seas Stories

*Final Assault on Omaha Beach
years of research in feature story*

“The Elsie Item”

Number 95, November 2016

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, or anyone related to an LCI veteran, or to anyone interested in the history of LCIs. Published quarterly by the USS LCI National Association. Joe Flynn, Editor.

Any material for publication should be sent to the Editor, by email (joeglo@msn.com)

Attention LCI Members – We are changing from a fiscal year to calendar year

The USS LCI National Association has moved from a fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) to a calendar year (January 1 to December 31.) Many members have said they prefer the calendar year as it is easier to keep current on subscriptions. So, annual subscriptions will be due and payable on or before January 1, 2017. Sorry for any inconvenience, but we hope the calendar year will be simpler.

***Life Members:** Payment of annual dues is necessary to continue receiving the Elsie Item.*

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***Moving?** If you moved recently or plan to move, and know your new address, please notify Robert E. Wright, Jr., Treasurer so we will know where to send your Elsie Item.*

Photos by: Lynne Flanders (mostly) and Joe Flynn. Thanks Lynne.

Checkout the new and improved USS LCI National Association Website

www.usslci.com Back issues of Elsie Item are there too for your enjoyment

www.amphibiousforces.org For information on the LCI 713

“Elsie Item” Notice: The USS LCI National Association is not responsible for the accuracy of articles submitted to the Editor for publication. Time and resources does not permit the opportunity to check each story, therefore, we rely on the author to research each article.



President's Message.....

Recently, I returned from New Orleans where I experienced a WONDERFUL reunion of the USS LCI National Association. The weather was great, the hospitality was warm and seeing our LCIers, friends and families together was priceless.

We will have our next National reunion in Portland, Oregon, May 14th through May 16th, 2017. It will be hosted by the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum. Once again, we will enjoy climbing aboard LCI 713 and visiting with their volunteers. It does not get any better than touching a real LCI.

The 2016 Reunion marked the 25th anniversary of our Association. During the past 25 years, our Association has had only five Presidents and three of them were LCI veterans – Bob Weisser, Jim Talbert and John Cummer. Those three gentlemen led our Association for the first 22 years. John took over as President in 2005 in New Orleans at the last National Reunion held there. At that time, Cummer took over the helm from outgoing President Jim Talbert. Sadly, John Cummer passed away early this year. Jim is the only known surviving founding father of our Association. We owe Jim a debt a gratitude.

While we enjoyed a grand time in New Orleans we did take care of important Association business. Key of course was our Memorial Service presided over by Chaplain, LCDR Shawn Turpin, USN. The names of our departed shipmates were read and the bell tolled to mark their passing. We then opened the General Membership meeting for a review and vote on the amended By Laws; and we re-elected existing Officers and a new Director, Peter Selan. Our Treasurer told us that we have avoided near insolvency. We cut our expenses with an all-volunteer operation; and dues payments and donations have made us solidly solvent.

This year also marks the first time in our Association history that the entire voting membership of the Executive Board consists of Associate Members. Jim Talbert was a little surprised when I told him. He said the original members did not envision Associate Members and they expected that the Association would dissolve when there were too few LCI veterans to run the organization. To Jim and all our LCI Veterans, I assure you that the Associate Members are committed to preserving your legacy and it is a privilege to do so.

John France, President

EMILE J. ROY, COOK FOR THE 347 AND BARBER FOR PRES. H.W. BUSH

By Joe Flynn

The search for crew of my brother's ship, the USS LCI(G) 347, located 14 LCI sailors, from the Captain to the Cook. And the Cook, Emile Roy was one of those "unforgettable characters" we had read about in Reader's Digest.

Emile picked up the 347 in Brownsville, TX, sailed through the Panama Canal and up the coast to San Diego. After training there, the 347 joined a Flotilla to the Aleutians to roust the Japanese from Attu and Kiska. The trip back to Hawaii was a harrowing. The Flotilla ran into a "Williwaw" a strong cold wind that sweeps down from coastal mountains with typhoon force.



Emile J. Roy, Cook 2c

Throughout the Campaign in the Pacific Emile continued his duties as Cook of the 347. At the Mobile, AL reunion, Emile asked, "Joe, did I ever tell you how I saved the entire crew of the 347?" I said, "No. And no other crew members ever mentioned

it. How did you do that?" He replied, "I stopped cooking!"

Released from Navy service he changed occupations and became a Barber. He must have enjoyed the work as he kept his shop in Sanford, MA open until he was 92 years old.

Along the way he had some very important customers, including ex-President George H.W. Bush who lived nearby in Kennebunkport, MA. And ex-Pres. G.W. Bush and brother Jeb.

Sadly, Emile sailed west this year.



Emile J. Roy, Barber with
Ex-President George H.W.
Bush in the chair.



Emile Roy, LCI(G) 347

The Name Game

The United States Navy is famous for naming ships – all kinds of ships – even the USS *Buttercup*, a damage control simulator at the Norfolk training base. There's a lot of names we at AFMM coulda attached to LCI-713, but that woulda not be right. So, we named some spaces to honor contributions of several long-time members.

...**Phil Reed Engine Room.** Phil Reed was a Motor Machinist Mate first class and plank owner on the LCI-35. He participated in five campaigns: North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Anzio and Normandy. Phil met his bride to be, Joy, at a dance in England before the invasion. He didn't see her until well after the war ended when Phil was able to arrange for her to come to the states. They have been happily married ever since.

Abe Lorenzo Radio Room. Lorenzo was a Radioman first class in LCI (L) 47, which took part in World War II Landings at Anzio and Salerno, Italy, and in France at Normandy and Operation Dragoon.

Tom Barnett Galley Tommy was a cook-baker on board LCI (G) 727. He could turn out two dozen loaves every other day; or peel a peck of potatoes -- that is, when he wasn't humping 60-pound drums of 20mm ammo during GQ. In March 2016, Tommy Barnett went to that cook & baker school in the sky.

Gordon Smith Wheelhouse: A Quartermaster first class, Smith was on LCI (L) 43 at Anzio and Salerno. Going ashore after the Allied landings, Smith met a German P.O.W. who was from Portland, Oregon. Back home Smith contacted the German soldier's parents to tell them their son was safe. Gordon is co-founder and honorary board chairman of the AFMM.

Dave McKay, Sr. Cookshack: LCI (L) 713 does not plan to restore the galley to full operation. So, we converted the former walk-in reefer to the "cook-shack," with a microwave and coffee pot. AFMM historian, Dave McKay Jr.'s

dad was a Seaman First Class cook on LCI-30, so we named the cook-shack in his honor.

Chuck Kellogg coffee mess: Chuck Kellogg was an Army vet and a "mover-and-shaker" in Portland and the owner of Northwest Copper. He helped persuade the Port of Portland to rent a berth at Swan Island lagoon to the AFMM. So, we named the coffee mess after him.

Loose Lips. And all that.

Okay: The other day Rich* and Marilyn Lovell were out estate sale-ing (not "sailing"). (*in Portland, OR*) At one place they met the owner. At the sale, Lovell's retinal radar espied a WWII blue jumper with an early version of the amphib forces patch on the sleeve. He offered was accepted. The uniforms will take their place in the LCI-713's on-board museum. But that's not the *whole* story. Rich introduced himself and learned, lo and behold, that Ken Galbreath had visited LCI-713 years before. They began to shoot the U-No-What:

In WW2 Galbreath served in a Landing Craft Tank (LCT) that went in to Iwo Jima to offload heavy equipment for the Allied assault. In April 1945 the LCT was part of the invasion of Okinawa, and transported units of the 77th Infantry division. But, as Ken told Rich, "We were on the wrong side of the island and the bottom of the LCT was scraping coral." Somehow, Galbreath survived the war – and then six bypass surgeries and a stroke. Was he upset about selling the farm he and his wife had lived on since 1949? Well, he said, a retirement community was better than "buying the farm."

Author's question: does anyone need an explanation of the term "bought the farm"?

Articles by John Wandres, AFMM

**Rich does double duty as VP of the AFMM and serves on the Board of Directors of the USS LCI National Association.*

USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION Reunion, New Orleans, Louisiana * Sept. 19 through 22, 2016

The Veterans and Widow picture below all received a \$150 Gift from an anonymous donor. A pleasant surprise to highlight the Reunion.



Assembled at the New Orleans LCI Reunion banquet on Sept. 22, 2016, are the WW II Veterans, one Widow, a LSM and a LSMR Veteran.

Photo; Back row, from left: Ralph Langenheim, LCI 551; Rene Fournier, LCI 503; Delbert Hollinger, LCI 470; Earl Carlin, LCI 472; Royal Wetzel, LCI 70; Leo Kelley, Sr., LSMR 409; Robert Banský, LCI 594; and Andrew Pomeroy, LCI 981.

Front row, from left: Harold McCreary, LCI 412; David Forman, LCI 36; John Reulet, LCI 70; Marvin Carpenter, LCI 455; Marlene Yandell, widow of Burton Yandell, LCI 64; and Raymond Olley, LSM 311. Photo by Lynne Flanders

New Orleans LCI Reunion National WW2 Museum Big time in Big Easy

The excitement for the 2016 LCI National Association reunion in New Orleans started way before the October 16 festivities. This was a first for the reorganized and all volunteer Board. In the past, the Association paid professionals to arrange these events. This time, Board members and a few other volunteers did it all. But it was not without some white-knuckle time. Early estimates were around 30 attendees. That mark was passed early so we had to find more hotel rooms and move the banquet to a venue that could handle 70 people for dinner.

We had a great turnout with 12 LCI Veterans, one LCI Widow, one LSM Veteran and one LSMR Veteran, and a boatload of relatives.

On site, we had help – Ed & Joann Benoit's grandson Eric Hamilton, a Marine veteran who is attending law school in New Orleans helped immeasurably. In this case, he was doing reconnaissance for the Association reunion. Eric was also one of our readers at the Memorial Service, and read his grandfather's name as the Bell was Tolded. Ed would have been proud.

Early Arrival and Happy Hour(s)

The fun began the day before registration. Early arrivals were treated to a complimentary beer, wine, and hors d'oeuvres happy hour (or two) in the patio. We loved our New Orleans welcome. And of course, our own recreation leader, Royal Wetzel, cook of the LCI 70, was there with Pennsylvania Bologna and Cheese. Navy cooks like Wetz won't let anyone go hungry.

Our LCI Guests had most of the first day to sightsee and eat, tour and eat, and relax and eat. New Orleans is a great place for sightseeing and enough restaurants to tingle



*Ralph Langenheim LCI 551, and Robert Wright,
Treasurer Happy hour Sea Stories*

every taste and satisfy every appetite. Choices run the gamut from Antoine's and Emeril's to Mother's and the Ugly Dog BBQ. What the last two lack in décor they make up in generous portions and great flavor, I guarantee!

The highlight of the reunion, the National WW2 Museum was also a great help in handling our tour. It is a fantastic museum which also holds one of Carl Chappel's LCI Models, donated by the Association. One day is hardly enough, and some LCI sailors went back for a second look.

Next event was the riverboat Natchez, a sternwheeler which easily accommodated the LCI crowd for an evening dinner cruise on the Mississippi. The food and the Dixieland music were big hits. After dinner, we had the run of the ship. Some went topside to listen to The Dixie Kings, and as you can expect, the MotorMacs ended up in the engine room. The sounds of power and the smell of diesel and lube oil made them feel right at home. Transportation to the events was provided by a cab service at rates negotiated by Treasurer, Robert Wright, Jr. He convinced them to sharpen their pencils, if you know what I mean.

The hotel also provided a complimentary hospitality room and space for our Business Meeting and Memorial Service on Saturday. Pres. John France opened the ceremonies and Chaplain, LCDR Shawn Turpin, conducted the

Memorial Service with a Call to Worship and Opening Prayer. The Litany of Remembrance was read, then the names of shipmates who sailed west since our last reunion. As the names were read the Bell was tolled by Rich Lovell, director assisted by Kristen Galik, daughter of Stan Galik, director.



Kristen Galik and Rich Lovell at Memorial

At the banquet Saturday evening, an active duty Navy Honor Guard presented the colors. Toasts were given to our Commander in Chief, the Navy, and our departed shipmates. Chaplain Turpin provided the Invocation and blessing before dinner.

At this reunion, the Board accomplished two things; we learned a lot, and we saved the Association a ton of money. Fortunately, we have been hanging around LCI sailors long enough that we learned to do more with less, and improvise. We never lacked for entertainment. The French Quarter is always exciting. Lots of shops, restaurants and yes there are even a few thirst parlors.

It would be hard to go hungry or thirsty in New Orleans. But our LCI veterans were on their best behavior and we did not record any run-ins with the Shore Patrol – this time. Can't vouch for their previous visits.

A Family Affair

This reunion was a family affair; our LCI sailors brought along a lot of relatives. And everyone's good friend John Reulet topped the list with ten of his family at the banquet.

Of course, John lives just up the road in Baton Rouge so we were in his home territory. His daughter Carol was our travel advisor, and took us shopping to get supplies and flowers for the Memorial services. I told you this was an all-volunteer effort.



John Reulet, LCI 70, and daughters, Carol and Ellen

John may have had the most relatives but LCI sailor Harold McCreary with four had the most generations; Robert McCreary, (2) Don McCreary, (3), and Chris McCreary, (4), And the smile gene must be hereditary because they all had the McCreary smile.

Speaking of smiles, the silver haired belle of the ball, Marlene Yandel, widow of Burton Yandel LCI 64, was always smiling. And at this reunion, if the LCI vets were happy everyone was happy. Must admit there were a few hitches and glitches along the way, as there are in any large family gathering, especially if it's a restaurant/hotel affair. But between the LCI sailors, their family and the Board the glitches were resolved and didn't get in the way of a good time.



Marlene Yandell and daughter Karo Thom

Many of the guests traveled considerable distances to get there. Delbert Hollinger, LCI 470 may take the prize for greatest distance driven. Del came from Pismo Beach, CA, about 2,000 miles. He drove pulling a 30' travel trailer." Later I learned he left California early so he could drive to West Virginia to visit relatives before coming to the reunion.



Royal Wetzel, LCI 70 "The Cook," and Delbert Hollinger, LCI 470 "The Traveler." We talked again after he drove home to Pismo Beach. Said he had a good trip and is making plans for Portland in May 2017. Said he wanted to go up to see his 108-year-old aunt. Gordon Smith of the 713 said he has a place lined up for Del to park his trailer. These guys don't stop.

So you see with this group, you never say good bye, you just say, "We'll see you at the next reunion!" And the next one is in Portland, OR, home of the LCI 713. The AFMM (Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum) crew has already started the arrangements. They

have a hotel lined up, a riverboat cruise, and a day on the 713. We will of course have a Memorial Service for our departed shipmates, followed by a business meeting and a banquet.

So, mark your calendars for May 14 – 16, 2017. More information on other pages, and more to follow in next Elsie Item. *J. Flynn*

Chaplain and the Board - 2016



In New Orleans: Chaplain LCDR Shawn Turpin USN, Joe Flynn, Vice President, John France, President, Rich Lovell and Stan Galik, Directors and Robert Wright, Jr Treasurer. Absent are, Chaplain Abe Laurenzo, Director Michael Pikos and new Director Peter Selan.



Four Generation of McCleary's; Seated Harold McCleary LCI 412 #1; back row, Chris, #4, Robert #2, and Don #3. All smiles.



David & Naomi Forman, LCI 36



*Andrew and Betty Pomeroy,
LCI 981*



Charles Masterson, LCI 652



*Robert Banský, LCI 594 and
daughters Nancy & Carol*



Rene Fournier, LCI 503



*Lucy Ree and Marvin Carpenter,
LCI 455*



*Raymond and Jane Olley,
LSM 311 –They Celebrated 70th
Wedding Anniversary. this year*



*Earl Carlin, LCI 472 &
grandson Brian.*



*Leo and Randy Kelley, Sr.,
LSMR 409 Vietnam*



*Peter Selan, newly elected
member of the LCI Board*



*Lynne Flanders, LSM group.
Credit for most Reunion pics.*

The Final LCI Assault of Omaha Beach June 6, 1944”

Written by John France – July 4, 2016

Looking back, it is nothing less than amazing, that those who served on Landing Craft Infantry – LCIs, accomplished so much in their sturdy yet brutally uncomfortable vessels. They were for the most part, teenagers and young men with very little time in uniform. The majority, including their officers, had never sailed on high seas before. They were, a navy of novices with a sprinkling of seasoned sailors against a very experienced enemy.

LCI crews included some very interesting characters. Some provided both humor and comfort in an ugly war far from home, yet a noted few were sources of controversy and conflict. However, all of them were dedicated to the same mission - to defeat the enemy and return home. All of them were patriots who deserve thanks and admiration from the following generations of Americans.

During WWII, a total of twenty-two Landing Craft Infantry (LCIs) under the American Flag were lost due to enemy action. Five were LCI (G)s – Guns, one was an LCI (M) – Mortar and sixteen were LCI (L)s – Large, tasked with landing troops on the beach. Of the sixteen LCI (L)s destroyed by the enemy, eight were lost on D-Day, June 6, 1944, while assaulting the beaches of Normandy, France. On June 11, 1944, the ninth LCI (L) was lost at Normandy when LCI 219 was sunk by a German bomber.

By mid-day, June 6, 1944, US Navy LCI (L) 232 had been sunk off Utah Beach after striking a mine and six LCI (L)s had been

destroyed at Omaha Beach after striking mines and being shelled by German artillery. These six LCIs consisted of four U.S. Coast Guard LCIs – 85, 91, 92 and 93, and two U.S. Navy LCIs – 497 and 553.

But the carnage was not over. At 1735 hours, eleven hours after the landings began, twelve U.S. Navy LCI (L)s of Flotilla 12, Group 35, headed for Easy Red and Fox Green Sectors of Omaha Beach to deliver the 26th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) of the First Infantry Division (ID), “Big Red One.” The 26th RCT was held in reserve until the 16th RCT and 18th RCT of the Big Red One “secured” the eastern side of Omaha Beach. With a special double daylight savings time for the invasion, there was plenty of daylight left. It would not get dark until after 2200. Contrary to plan, the beaches were still a very dangerous place when LCI Group 35 headed for shore. There was still significant enemy artillery and mortar fire, sporadic machine gun and sniper fire, and the ever- present danger of teller mines and obstacles.

LCI Group 35, Flotilla 12 was born in the George Lawley & Sons Shipbuilding Corporation, Neponset, Massachusetts and the New Jersey Shipbuilding Corporation, Barber, New Jersey where LCI (L)s 401, 403, 415, 416, 417, 418, 420, 537, 538, 539, 542 and 556 were launched during January and February, 1944. The 400 series were built at Lawley & Sons and the 500 series were built at New Jersey Shipbuilding. Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI (L) 414, was also launched at Lawley & Sons. The crews only had a month or two to acquaint themselves with their new homes, new watch duties, perform shakedown cruises and work out the bugs of their LCIs

before sailing across the Atlantic Ocean and to war. In some cases, the normal two-week “fitting-out” period was cut to five days.



Lt. (jg) John Forby Schereschewsky

Lt. (jg) John Forby Schereschewsky, Skipper of LCI 415, was waiting to sail from Little Creek, Virginia with other LCIs of Flotilla 12. He was known before the war as “Mr. Sherry” and was a football star and graduate of Harvard University. He and his wife Betty purchased a private boarding school for boys – Rumsey Hall in Connecticut in 1940 but Mr. Sherry would leave Betty behind to run the school for two years while he served in the Navy. Sherry wrote home to Betty often and in detail about his crew and wartime experiences. As Skipper, he was the censor of his own letters and he was liberal in his censorship. On 03/20/1944, he sent Betty several photographs including the first photo of the crew of the 415. He identified all crewmembers in the photo but noted that Harold Raper, from Indiana, refused to

participate in the photo. He inexplicably squat behind his shipmates to hide from the camera. Sherry also noted in the letter that Electricians Mate 1st Class, Arthur Virgil Shields had just finished cutting Sherry’s hair.

Shields was born 12/04/1916. At age 27, he was the oldest and most senior petty officer onboard LCI 415. He was from Port Angeles, Washington where he worked in the finishing room of a pulp mill. He was married to his second wife, Marla Mae Shields, who resided in Los Angeles, California. Shields enlisted December 8, 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Shields was a veteran of amphibious landings in Eastern New Guinea in the Pacific in 1943, serving onboard LCI 27 (L).

He was admired by Mr. Sherry and highly respected by his shipmates. Doyle Eugene Wingard, 415’s cook, described Shields as “a leader, dependable, and an outstanding gentleman”. Everyone looked up to him.”

Doyle Wingard was born 05/13/1925. He had seven siblings. He was drafted in 07/1943 in Altoona, Pennsylvania. After boot camp in Sampson, New York, he attended Cook School at Noroton Heights, Connecticut where he learned to cook the fine cuisine he would serve to shipmates and soldiers alike on LCI 415.

The LCIs of Flotilla 12 sailed from Little Creek, Virginia to England via the Azores in three different convoys. They first arrived in Falmouth Harbor, then Plymouth and finally sailing up the Tamar River to anchor near the Albert Railroad Bridge at Saltash, a frequent target of German Bombers. The LCIers journey at sea lasted at least 23 days and they slipped into Saltash on March 26, April 13 and April 26, 1944. The first group was led

by the temporary commander of Flotilla 12 – Lt. Commander Lindsey Henry onboard LCI 408, who would command Group 34 on D Day. The second group was led by Commander T. S. Cameron onboard LCI 414, the Flotilla 12 Flagship. The last group was commanded by Lt. Commander Clinton Bleeker Duma Brown onboard LCI 420, who would command Group 35 on D Day.

The journey across the Atlantic was a miserable experience and most suffered from sea sickness as their flat bottomed LCIs were tossed around like corks in rough seas. On 03/25/1944, Mr. Sherry wrote his wife Betty that LCI 415 was assigned as the 7th ship in the third column of the convoy with 500 yards between ships and 1000 yards between columns, a 6 ½ mile wide front to the convoy. That formation did not survive the first night with the convoy traveling without lights in the moonless darkness. Mr. Sherry resorted to nudging up close to the stern of a transport ship and hoped that the transport did not get lost. The other LCI skippers did the same. By the next morning, the 415 was the fourth ship in the fourth column. The convoy was hopelessly mixed up but was still on course.

On 03/29/1944, Mr. Sherry wrote again to his wife, informing her that EM 1/c Shields expertly made a spare wooden flag bag during the voyage. This was quite a feat in rough seas. Sherry noted that LCI 415 was routinely rolling 15 degrees and rolled over as much as 20 degrees. The ship was hammered by winds up to 40 knots. Sherry dressed down poor ships cook Doyle Wingard for not properly securing the ships dinnerware. Wingard never knew that he was later vindicated in England by Lt. (jg) Harold Ashworth of LCI 420, who had collateral duties as the “Culinary Officer.” Ashworth

was tasked to acquire replacement dinnerware at an English Depot because all LCIs from Group 35 had dishes broken during the rough trans-Atlantic crossing. Coincidentally, on the bottom of each plate was the word “Ashworth.” Perhaps by chance, the dinnerware was made by Harold Ashworth’s distant relatives in England.



Doyle Wingard, Ship's Cook

Mr. Sherry, proudly wrote to his wife Betty about his crew. However, all was not well on LCI 415. Ship's cook Doyle Wingard observed that Mr. Sherry, the pre-war headmaster, had a habit of addressing crewmembers as if they were students at his Rumsey Hall boarding school. When Sherry observed, a sailor performing a task well, Sherry would pat the seaman on the head and say “Good job sonny!” The crew viewed this as condescending. Even though most were teenagers, they were off to war and they wanted to be treated like fighting men. Some of the crew confided in Wingard that they were going on a hunger strike. A meeting was held in the wardroom consisting of Mr. Sherry, Cook Wingard, EM 1st Class Shields and Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Joseph Carter. Shields, the spokesperson for the crew, told Mr. Sherry “We should be willing to go through hell with you but we are not even

willing to go to heaven with you.” To Mr. Sherry’s credit, after hearing the harsh statement from Shields, he changed the manner which he addressed the crew. Wingard noted that, “Things got better”. The crew continued to eat the fine cuisine prepared by Cook Wingard and Mr. Sherry continued to praise his crew in letters to Betty. The officers and the fighting men of the 415 were ready for war.

After two weeks at sea, all LCIers delighted at the sight of the beautiful islands of the Azores with turquoise waters and pastel colored buildings. Some were granted a day and half of blissful leave in the Port of Horta. Others were detained on board if they were unlucky to arrive after an alleged incident of a Stewards Mate from a U.S. Navy Oiler killing a local with a knife in a bar. Regardless, the brief stay in the Azores was a welcome respite from the rough seas before continuing to England.

All LCIers bound for England had their own unique stories about the Azores. Ensign Harold G. Ashworth, 22 years old from Rochester, New York was the Communications Officer onboard LCI 420. His Skipper was Lieutenant John Boyce, an Architect who attended Cornell University. The Executive Officer was Steve Besse, a graduate from Oregon State University, who suffered as much as anyone with sea sickness. Besse was born 12/26/1919 in Cheyenne, Wyoming but grew up in Corvallis, Oregon. He enlisted in the Navy 01/1942 and participated in the V-7 program by attending Midshipman school at Columbia University. Ashworth was a “90 Day Wonder” who had been in an accelerated V12 Program and with one semester remaining at Union College in Schenectady, New York, was sent by the

Navy to Colombia University for Midshipman School. He was one of the late arrivals to the 420 at Little Creek, Virginia, and missed the shakedown cruise.

Ashworth reported that when attempting to dock in the Port of Horta, Azores, the Portuguese pilot did not know how to say “slow engines” in English, so Skipper Boyce brought the 420 in “too hot” and nearly plowed into the dock. This was one of many ship handling incidents that Boyce became known for. Aboard the 420 was Group 35 Commander Clinton Brown, who was “unhappy” about the docking and was about to become less happy.

LCI 420 carried a top secret “crypto photographic” machine in the hold where it served as ballast along with a load of sweet potatoes. No one onboard knew much about the machine except that it was top secret and its protection and safe delivery was a high priority. After the 420’s near miss with the dock, a Navy armed contingent and Portuguese stevedores boarded her to transfer the crypto photographic machine to parts unknown. The pier to which they had to move the machine was two ships over from the 420. As four stevedores struggled to offload the large crate containing the machine, they stumbled and dropped it into those beautiful turquoise waters of the Azores. The stunned stevedores and Navy contingent disappeared in a heartbeat. Someone was in trouble but it was not Ashworth. As far as Ashworth knows, that crypto photographic machine, still lays on the bottom of the bay.

In England, the LCIers of Group 35, Flotilla 12 settled into a life of continuous air raids, training and preparations for the invasion.

The nearby town of Plymouth was in shambles from the German bombers and V-1 rockets but that did not stop the LCIers from enjoying their shore leave. Movies, dances the warm beer required an acquired taste for the Yankee sailors. Leo Berg, Signalman 2nd Class on LCI 416 remembered his adventures ashore very well. He attended his first dance in Plymouth. Leo got drunk on one beer. Leo's shipmate told him that he danced the entire time with his mouth wide open. Afterwards, Leo was outside with his dance partner during a V-1 rocket attack. When, one of the rockets exploded, the girl jumped into Leo's arms. The girl was terrified and Leo was delighted. Leo was 19 years old from Brooklyn, New York. He was drafted 08/18/1943, survived six weeks of boot camp at Sampson, New York and went on to Signalman's School at the University of Illinois. Leo's fun in England was to be short lived.

On 05/15/1944, Mr. Sherry wrote home to his wife that he had visited a sailing club with Ensign Nave, the Engineering Officer of LCI 416. There were few opportunities to spend his money and he found British Pound notes confusing and referred to them as "Chinese Money". He complained that when he used the paper money to purchase a beer, he was given "three tons of copper ballast" in return as change.

The bulk of Sherry's letter was reserved for criticism of LCI Group 35 Commander, Lt. Commander Clinton Bleecker Duma Brown who Sherry referred to as "Stinker Brown" and "The GREAT BIG NAVY COMMANDER" who is "darn good on flag hoists". Sherry was not alone in his criticism of his Group Commander. Brown was disliked by other officers of Group 35.

Harold Ashworth, who suffered under Brown on LCI 420, the Group 35 Flagship, believed that Brown had sold bonds before the war and that he was a lawyer who had passed the bar only after several failed attempts. At least that was the rumor and rumors run rampant around officers who were disliked. Clinton Bleecker Duma Brown was a descendant of early New Yorkers. There is an east-west "Bleecker Street" in Manhattan that was built on the Bleecker farm. Brown married a U.S. Navy WAVE Officer a week before sailing to England. They had only met three weeks before their wedding and they were wed in their Navy Blues. Brown's new bride was Nona Baldwin Brown, who before the war was the first female reporter with the New York Times to get her own byline.

On May 22, most of Flotilla 12 sailed to Fowey for a pre-invasion diversion. On the 29th, the LCIers witnessed a spectacular air raid on Falmouth that lit up the sky like the Fourth of July. On the 30th, the Flotilla returned to Saltash and June 1 was loading day. Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVPs), "Higgins Boats" brought troops up the river from Plymouth. The twelve LCIs of Group 35 loaded the three infantry battalions of the 26th Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division. LCI 414, commanded by Lt. (jg) Robert J. Erickson, carried Flotilla 12 Commander T.S. Cameron and Brigadier General Sands, Commander of the 29th Infantry Division Artillery with accompanying staff and Military Police Platoon Headquarters staff. Seaman 1st Class Roland T. Harris became accustomed to all the brass onboard the 414. A native of Sandusky, Ohio, he was two days short of his 18th birthday. Harris attended Sandusky Industrial Arts School through 10th grade.

When he was drafted in Toledo, Ohio, he told an officer he wanted to be in the Navy. He was a “Plank Owner” of the 414 as part of the nucleus crew at the Lawley & Sons Shipyard during the winter of 1944. Harris was destined to sail the 414 back to Lawley & Sons in 1946 for decommissioning.

On June 1st, John Jeffries, Electricians Mate 2nd Class watched the soldiers of Company A, 26th Regiment clamber aboard LCI 538. They told him they were veterans of North Africa and Sicily. Jeffries was born 10/05/1923 in Baltimore, Maryland. He was of English and Irish decent and he got along well with the locals. He enlisted 10/27/1942 and after “Boots” in Bainbridge, Maryland, he attended Electrical School in Detroit, Electrical Interior Communications School at the Washington Navy Yard and on to Solomons, Maryland for Amphibious training. Jeffries was a “Plank Owner” of the 538 who had picked her up at the shipyard in Barber, New Jersey and sailed on her shakedown cruise in the Chesapeake.

Jeffries shipmate was John “Jack” Schmidt, Radioman 2nd Class who was born in Columbus, Ohio 06/23/1924. He did not know he was adopted by his parents until he enlisted in the Navy 01/10/1943. He enlisted in the Navy because he was convinced he would be drafted into the Army. He failed his first attempt at enlistment due to poor eye sight but was successful on his second attempt after memorizing the eye chart. The Navy caught up with his poor vision at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center but allowed him to remain. Both Jeffries and Schmidt were very fond of their Skipper, Lt. (jg) Colin R. Chisolm, a 20-year career Navy veteran who bore a striking resemblance to the movie star, Gary Cooper.

Lt. (jg) Stuart Reed, the commanding officer of LCI 416, watched L Company, 26th Regiment, commanded by Captain Linwood Billings climb aboard. Reed, a native of Detroit, Michigan was highly respected by his peers and his crew. Signalman 2nd Class Leo Berg watched his skipper – Reed, and Ensigns Nave and Evans busy themselves with getting all the troops settled in their temporary home. Berg did not speak with the troops. He kept to himself, trying to visualize the dangers they would meet on the beaches of the Normandy Coast. Berg’s fellow Signalman, John Arthur Hawkins, was a handsome, 19 years old from Camden, New Jersey. His parents were born in England and his father was a veteran of WWI. Hawkins worked at the New Jersey Bottling Company prior to enlisting in the Navy in August, 1942. Berg’s shipmate, John Leffingwell, Motor Machinist 2nd Class, was born in Torrington, Connecticut 6/24/25. His father signed for him at enlistment in New Haven in March, 1943, after which he went directly to “Boots”, basic training in Newport, Rhode Island and then directly to Diesel School in Richmond, Virginia. He was a “Plank Owner” of the 416.

After a one - day postponement of the invasion due to stormy weather, General Eisenhower gave the invasion force a “go.” At 0300, June 6, 1944, Group 35 consisting of LCIs 401, 403, 415, 416, 417, 418, 420, 537, 538, 539, 542, 556, led by Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI 414, sailed in two columns with Task Group 126.3 towards the Normandy Coast. The task force was led by the Attack Cargo Ship USS Achernar (AKA-53) which was the command ship for the 1st Infantry Division. They were escorted by destroyers USS Maloy (DE 791), USS Ellyson (DD 454), two U.S. Patrol Crafts, two British

Corvettes and one U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Vessel. At 1315 hours, they sighted the Cherbourg Peninsula. Upon reaching the assembly area, they observed a French cruiser pounding the enemy with its heavy guns. She had civilians onboard the fantail where a huge tri-color flag waved in the wind. After anchoring for only four minutes, Group 35 was commanded to sail towards the smoke shrouded Omaha Beach. LCIers donned anti-gas suits and at 1647 they were at General Quarters, three hundred yards off Easy Red and Fox Green sectors of Omaha Beach. At 1735, Lt. Commander Clinton Brown, ordered his Group 35 to begin the assault on the beaches.



At 1800, at low tide with obstacles exposed, LCI 542, commanded by Lt. (jg) Frederick Van Vechten, struck a sandbar in front of Easy Red beach and lowered ramps. Coxswain J. W. Roberts made two attempts, once from each ramp, to carry the man rope and grapnel to shore. During both attempts, he was swept down the beach in the current. Captain Ozell Smooth and his E Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th RCT was ordered aft to lift the bow but this effort failed. The 542

retracted and made another run for the beach. At 1826, she beached amongst sporadic mortar and artillery fire, and Boatswains Mate 2nd Class W. D. Beloin, lowered the ramps. Roberts, still soaking wet with his attempts at running the man rope and grapnel to shore on the first run, manned the starboard ramp controls and boosted the troop's morale as he cheered and joked with them as they clambered down the ramp.

LCI 417, commanded by Ensign Elwyn G. Hughes, was close at port and LCI 93 which had been battered by enemy artillery fire hours before was stranded on the beach dead ahead. The tide was coming in fast. Nearby, destroyers provided close support. German planes bombed to port. The situation was tolerable until LCI 418, commanded by Lt. (jg) W.A. Smith, attempted to beach close by on starboard and the current swept the 418 towards the 542. The 418 port sponson caught a fantail chock of the 542 which pushed the stern of the 542 into the 417. The 542's gasoline drum was broached and Ensign Herbert Hand jettisoned it and cut away the barrage balloon that was attracting enemy artillery fire. At 1840, the 542's port ramp was disabled and three minutes later, the starboard ramp was carried away by the current. The 418 then became entangled in the anchor cable of the 542. Motor Machinist Mate 3rd Class Frederick Wicks was standing in gasoline covering the deck around the winch engine. The cable was so taut it was in danger of snapping. Seawater was splashing Wicks from incoming enemy shells as he calmly operated the winch and prevented the cable from parting and the ship from broaching. Alone and without communication with his officers on the

conning tower, Frederick Wicks saved the 542.

At 1846, LCI 418 was clear of the 542 and the 542 began to retract from the beach. Three LCIs grouped together made a big target. As they retracted from the beach, a salvo of enemy mortar rounds struck the water where they had just vacated. Some of the rounds struck the dying LCI 93 which was stuck on the beach. The 542 had been beached for 20 frustrating and dangerous minutes. After retracting, the 542 reported to the Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI 414 and was ordered to stand by near the command ship, USS Ancon.



LCI 538 made her run for the beach. At 1828 she beached at Easy Red sector with 109 fathoms of cable to her stern anchor.

However, the troops of A Company 1st Battalion, 26th RCT did not disembark due to deep water in the front of the sand bar on which they were stranded. At 1838, Skipper C. R. Chisolm, ordered that the 538 be retracted from the beach and at 1852, she beached again on Easy Red with 90 fathoms of cable released astern. Radioman 2nd Class Jack Schmidt, decided to step out of the pilot house to get a better view of the action but

quickly retreated inside when he saw shrapnel splashing the water around him. In the meantime, the soldiers moved down the ramps. The first soldier to step off of a ramp, was 1st Lt. Thomas Anderson, who waved his pistol. All troops got ashore. The Executive Officer called down to Electricians Mate 2nd Class John Jeffries at the switchboard in the engine room and instructed him to go to troop compartment #2 and assist Pharmacist Mate Richard Bard with five casualties that had been offloaded from a rubber boat and brought up the port ramp of the 538. In route, Jeffries saw mortar rounds striking the water and heard shrapnel slam against the hull. When Jeffries arrived in the troop compartment, he immediately went to work to cut away the sleeve of a wounded soldier, exposing muscle hanging out of the bicep but no blood. The Pharmacist Mate dressed the wound. The other four soldiers were more seriously injured. It was a bloody, horrific scene.

LCI 539 was to port of the 538 followed by the 537 and the 416. The 403 was close at starboard. As the 403 retracted from the beach, her portside "I" beam that supported the ramp, struck a stanchion of the 538 and ripped about twenty feet of railing off the deck. The 538 retracted from the beach at 1908 and returned to transport area.

At 1720, Mr. Sherry and crew of LCI 415 waited at the line of departure about 2000 yards off shore, awaiting orders to go in. To port and starboard, French and American cruisers lobbed large shells inland. Overhead, small formations of American aircraft made bombing runs on the woods along the cliff line. Destroyers shelled the cliff edges. Easy Red sector was in front of the 415. The beach was at low tide and was littered with

destroyed vehicles and amphibious vessels which included LCIs 553, 497, 93 and 487. Although the other LCIs were not salvageable, a few crewmen desperately tried to patch holes in the 487 to refloat her during the next incoming tide.

Smaller Landing Craft Medium (LCMs), Higgins Boats (LCVPs), and Landing Craft Tank (LCTs) appeared to be going in all directions as they entered the beach area to land soldiers and equipment. Black smoke lifted 20 to 30 feet in the air as German artillery and mortar rounds smashed the beach. At 1801, LCIs 415, 416, 539 and 556 were ordered by voice from Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI 414, to head for Easy Red instead of Fox Green as originally planned. However, Sherry could not find 25 yards of open beach on Easy Red, so at 2/3 speed, he veered to port for the extreme right of Fox Green. At 1816, the 415 struck a sand bar with 50 yards of deep water between her bow and the beach. LCI 416 was 50 yards to starboard with the 537 further starboard. Ensign Lash had the ramps run out. Mortar rounds struck the beach in front of the 415 as Electricians Mate 1st Class Arthur Shields, who had volunteered to secure the man rope with grapnel hook to the beach for the soldiers, ran down the starboard ramp. As soon as he hit the water, he sank over his head. He fought the strong current flowing to port as he swam to shore. Upon arriving to shallow waters, Shields turned and signed that the water was too deep for the soldiers. He was pulled back to the 415 with the line he held.

In the meantime, Lt. Colonel John Thomas Corley, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 26th RCT who was onboard LCI 415 was agitated and anxious to get his troops ashore and into

the fight. Corley, already a decorated soldier, would go on to be one of the most decorated soldiers in American history, with two Distinguished Service Crosses, eight Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. Mr. Sherry informed Corley that he would try moving the 415 over the sand bar. After moving the troops on the well deck, all engines were put on all ahead full. More shrapnel splashed near the 415 and it became clear that the 415 was not going to surmount the sandbar. Corley advised Sherry to retract “before they zeroed in on us.” Ship’s Cook Doyle Wingard, who was manning the forward 20MM, starboard clearly heard Lt. Col. Corley shout towards the top of the conning tower “Shit or get off the pot. You’re going to get my men killed!” At that point,



two soldiers appeared exhausted and struggling in the water to starboard, drifting parallel to the beach. One did not have a life belt and the other was attempting to support the other. Two or three other soldiers were observed sinking below the waves, not to re-surface. A crewman threw a life ring to the soldiers but it fell short. Colonel Corley sent one of his soldiers scrambling into a rubber boat off the port side to help, but the soldier had trouble straightening the boat in the strong cross current. Ensign Dunn threw another life ring to the drowning soldiers but that too fell short. Electricians Mate 1st Class Shields, still breathing hard from his swim ashore with the grapnel hook, without hesitation and without orders, dove into the water and swam towards the drowning soldiers. Only a few minutes had passed from the time the soldiers were observed in distress in the water until Shields dove in for the rescue. In the meantime, the order had been given to retract the 415 off the beach. Only a few onboard knew that Shields had returned to the water. As the 415 retracted, Shields reached the soldiers, who by that time, one soldier without the life belt had panicked and was dragging the other soldier under. Shields supported them until they drifted to the soldier in the rubber boat. Shields hoisted one soldier into the boat and then dragged the other exhausted soldier to shallow water. When Mr. Sherry received the news that Shields was back in the water, the 415 was already clear of the sandbar. Fearing that the 415 would broach, Sherry continued retracting, believing that Shields would see them beach again and join them. The last time crew of the 415 saw Shields, he was seeking shelter behind a tank on the beach.

Sherry sailed LCI 415 a half mile up the Beach of Easy Red until he found an opening, about 100 yards wide. The 415 made another run towards the shore, only to narrowly dodge an LCT retracting from the beach. The LCT had been pushed by the current and drifted in front of the 415. The 415 then drifted to port and onto a drowned jeep. Two shells then struck the shore where they intended to beach. At that time, Sherry received a voice message hailed from Group 35 Flagship LCI 420 which was retracting from the beach: "415, Are you in difficulties?" Sherry's colorful voice reply to Lt. Commander Clinton Brown was fortunately not heard.

At 1852, LCI 415 beached. The 415 put out its ramps and Company M, the heavy weapons company, commanded by Captain Rafael Uffner, began to disembark at 1853. Colonel Corley had instructed a sergeant and three other soldiers to remain onboard with the company's blanket rolls to offload later. During the beaching, that sergeant ran up to the conning tower and informed Sherry that the "f..... barrage balloon" attached to the LCI was a point of aim for German gunners. Mr. Sherry ordered the balloon cut loose. By 1902, Lt. Col. Corley, his HQ platoon and M Company were off the 415.

At the same time LCI 415 beached on Easy Red, LCI 401 beached 30 yards to her starboard. The 401 was assigned to land C Company, 1st battalion, 26th RCT on Fox Green beach sector but was unsuccessful due to hitting a sandbar with deep water forward. The 401 retracted and beached on Easy Red and safely landed the troops without army casualties. However, during the beaching, one of the 401s crewmen suffered shrapnel wounds from enemy fire.

The stern anchor cable of LCI 415 entangled with that of the 401. Mr. Sherry and Ensign Ahlert Wolff, the Skipper of the 401, maneuvered and made rudder and power adjustments to avoid disaster and the anchor cables of both LCIs were cut. The stern of the 401 drifted into the side of the 415 but no damage was done. Both the 415 and 401 cleared the beach and headed seaward to rejoin other LCIs of Group 35 assembled near the amphibious assault command ship, USS Ancon.

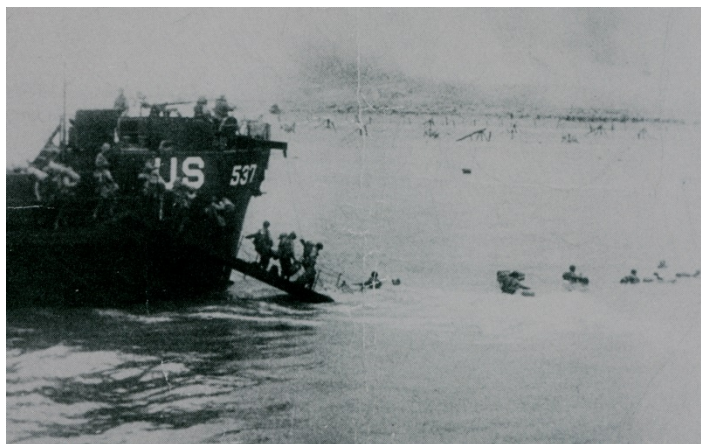
As LCI 416 made her run for the beach, Motor Machinist Mate 2nd Class John Leffingwell was at his post in the engine room. Before the ramps were dropped, the 416 struck a teller mine near steering aft. The blast threw Leffingwell against the switchboard. The shafts for the screws were bent and did not respond to Skipper Stuart Reed's order to reverse. They were stuck on Fox Green beach. Signalman 2nd Class Leo Berg was standing next to the Skipper on the conning tower when the 416 struck the mine. Reed ordered the ramps out, disembarked Captain Linwood Billings and his L Company troops, and then tried in vain to extract his stricken ship from the beach. Reed ordered Leo Berg to take all ships papers to the fantail and burn them. Reed then ordered abandon ship. Berg complied with Reed's order and as he burned the ship's papers, shells rained down around the 416. Berg dove behind the winch as one shell dropped close by. Berg escaped the shrapnel but standing nearby, Motor Machinist Mate 3rd Class, Edward Goss from Swansea, Massachusetts was not so lucky, as he was struck by hot flying steel. Berg saw Goss's plight and he grabbed Goss and half carried him to the bow of the 416 where he turned the wounded Goss over to

Pharmacist Mate 2nd Class Louis Wilkowski. Berg then jumped overboard into a raft occupied by a couple of his shipmates. Unfortunately, the raft was spinning around in the current so Berg gave up and jumped out of the raft with water up to his neck. Berg simply walked forward until he was on dry land. Berg was not scared until he began seeing casualties amongst the beach obstacles. One body was all too familiar. It was his fellow Signalman and shipmate, John Hawkins, who lay dead with eyes open. Berg moved on, seeking shelter from the shellfire. During this time, John Leffingwell, dove off the fantail of the 416 and swam the length of the vessel. He too finally reached shore and sought shelter.

Lt. (jg) Stuart Reed demonstrated courage and presence of mind under fire as he supervised the evacuation of his crew from the stricken LCI 416. The Navy would recognize his valor by awarding him the Silver Star.

Electricians Mate 1st Class, Arthur Shields, after saving the two soldiers from drowning, ran to the nearest LCI to hitch a ride off the beach. Unfortunately, he ran up the ramp of the mortally wounded LCI 416. Although, not his LCI and on orders to abandon ship, Shields stayed behind to assist Pharmacist Mate Wilkowski and Ensigns Nave and Evans carry the wounded Edward Goss along the beach in search of another vessel to take them seaward and to safety. As they maneuvered through the beach obstacles, mortar shells rained down upon them. They reached an abandoned DUKW amphibious truck, at which point Shields again demonstrated leadership skills. He suggested that they scatter or a single shell would kill them all. Shortly after the group scattered, another volley of shells screamed down on them.

They threw themselves flat on the ground and the shells burst around them. One of the officers had a three-inch hole torn into his sweater by shrapnel but miraculously he was untouched. Shields was not lucky. Shrapnel tore through his back and out his stomach creating a large wound. A Pharmacist Mate assigned to the 6th Beach Battalion responded and sprinkled sulfa powder on Shields' wound and applied a field dressing. He informed Ensigns Nave and Evans that Shields was too gravely injured to be moved. Wilkowski got Goss off the beach to safety and medical care. Ensigns Nave and Evans remained at the side of the mortally wounded Shields for three hours under enemy fire. The 6th Beach Battalion Pharmacist Mate promised Ensigns Nave and Evans that he would get Shields to a field hospital, once one was established on the beach. Nave and Evans finally left Shields behind with the medic knowing that Shields probably wasn't going to survive.



LCI 537 (L) was assigned to land D Company and officers of 1st Battalion staff of the 26th RCT, 1st ID on Fox Green Sector of Omaha Beach. At 1500, she arrived at Assault Area 80. At 1600, when the tide was low, the 537 followed Flotilla 12 Flagship LCI 414 towards the beach. Six German tanks appeared on top of the ridge overlooking the beach and fired upon the beachhead. The 537

dropped back about 1,000 yards for another hour until U.S. Destroyers drove off the tanks and the 537 was again ordered to the beach. At 1803, the 537 made a beaching at Easy Red Sector at normal speed but hit a sandbar. The 537 was not receiving enemy fire at that time. Coxswain Donald F. Kelleher, who volunteered to take the grapnel and line to the beach jumped off the ramp. Without orders, about 20 soldiers descended the ramp to follow him. Before Kelleher could reach the shore, the rope was wrestled from his grip by the soldiers behind him. The soldiers floundered in water above their heads and the 537 crewmen dove into the surf to save them. One soldier drowned. An inflatable rubber raft was lowered overboard and three soldiers made their way in it to the beach. Most of the soldiers were pulled back onto the 537.

Two more attempts were made to beach at full speed. Both attempts were under enemy fire and LCI 537 was raked with shrapnel. The barrage balloon floating 20 ft above the ship was shot down. On the third attempt at 1940, the 537 Skipper, Lt. (jg) Wallace T. Davis successfully beached with two lines tied to a hedgehog obstacle. The commander of the 1st Battalion, Lt. Col. Francis Murdoch was first off a ramp but the remainder of the troops were hesitant and disembarked only after strong encouragement to do so. Before the last troops could disembark from the 537, sailors from LCI 416 approached the 537 and asked to board. They were told to wait until all troops were off and then the 416 crew, minus Goss, Hawkins, Wilkowski, Nave and Evans clambered aboard. Rather than risk waiting for the remainder of the 416 crew, the 537 Skipper received a promise from an LCVP crew that they would wait for them. At 2005, the 537 attempted to retract from the

beach under increasing enemy fire, only to find that its stern anchor line had fouled on a capsized LCT. An LCVP attempted to push the 537 seaward but the Skipper finally ordered the anchor cable cut. The skipper wheeled the 537 against beach obstacles and returned to the transport area.

Most LCIs on Omaha Beach delivered one load of troops to the shore. However, a few, including Group 35 Flagship, LCI 420 made multiple trips to the beach. Lt. Commander Clinton Brown, Skipper John Boyce, Harold Ashworth, Steve Besse, and their shipmates repeatedly faced the German guns and mines. For Ensign Ashworth, a reminder of the impending dangers was watching the veterans of the 26th RCT huddled in small groups in prayer as they headed for shore. On the 420's first run to Easy Red beach, Seaman 2nd Class Lucien Hamel secured the light line to the beach with the grapnel and Captain John Kelly and his F Company, 26th RCT poured ashore. As the 420 retracted from the beach, an artillery shell struck the water nearby starboard, another struck the water to port and as the 420 turned seaward and powered at flank speed, a third round struck the cable holding the barrage balloon and blew the balloon off the fantail.

When LCI 420 returned to a troop ship to pick up another load of soldiers, Ensign Besse espied a cook through the porthole of the troop ship. The cook noticed Besse drooling over the roast beef sandwiches he was preparing in the galley and asked Besse if he wanted one. Besse responded with an enthusiastic yes and in short order, the cook passed roast beef sandwiches through the porthole for every crewman of the 420. It was a wonderful respite from the dangerous beach landings but it did not last long. As Ensigns

Besse and Ashworth savored their sandwiches, they watched in horror as a soldier climbing down the rope ladder from the troop transport to the 420, slipped and fell and was crushed between the two vessels.

It was likely the decision of Group 35 commander Clinton Brown that LCI 420 made repeated trips to the beach. Lt. Commander Brown was courageous but controversial. Skipper John Boyce of the 420 later informed fellow Skipper, Mr. Sherry of LCI 415 that when he gave the order to let go the stern anchor on the first run to the beach, Lt. Commander Brown grabbed the voice tube



and shouted to belay the order. Boyce repeated his order, which was carried out, but he lost precious time and only 38 fathoms of cable were laid out instead of the usual 75 to 100 fathoms used to retract the LCI. During another run to the beach, the stern anchor was caught on an obstacle. The Executive Officer Steve Besse and the Engineering Officer, Ensign Henry J. Hogan hailed an LCVP to remove the stern anchor that was entangled on a beach obstacle. Brown took exception to asking others for help and suggested to the officers that the 420 could take care of its own problems. With American bodies floating in

the water and shells raining down on them, Besse and Hogan were in no mood for Brown's interference. Apparently, Brown sensed their anger and told them to carry on as they were, then Brown left them alone. Ensign Ashworth observed that on yet another run to the beach, Brown angered Skipper John Boyce by ordering him to delay retracting until Brown had taken photographs. Boyce refused. Eventually, the frustrated John Boyce, threatened to have his superior officer, Lt. Commander Brown arrested for interfering with ships operations.

During one of the four runs to the beach for LCI 420, Ensign Besse was struck in the helmet with shrapnel and knocked to the deck. On the third run to the beach shortly before dark, Besse went below deck to the troop compartment to advise an officer they would be beaching within five minutes. The officer asked if the "pitter patter" he heard on the hull was rain. Besse replied it was shrapnel. Later that night, during a hair-raising run to the beach, the 420 and another LCI towed a barge with 10,000 tons of exposed ammunition. As the 420 neared the beach around 2230, the sky lit up with ships guns blazing, as an air raid commenced over the fleet.

At that time, LCI 401 was underway to deliver her wounded LCler to a Landing Ship Tank (LST) used as field hospital. Presumably following LCI 401's wake, a German JU 88 bomber dropped a stick of five bombs at her. Fortunately, all missed their mark. A JU 88 bomber attacked LCI 537 but she too sustained no damage. The Skipper, Lt. (jg) W.T. Davis, decided to stay away from the larger transports that posed a more desirable target. During the attack, the Skipper of LCI 542, Lt. (jg) Frederick Van Vechten, dodged other vessels and sticks of

bombs and observed three German planes shot down – one overhead.

The JU 88 shot down overhead of the 542 was the victim of Seaman 1st Class Roland T. Harris on Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI 414. The 414 was anchored near the USS Ancon, the Omaha Beach Assault Force command ship. Harris observed a JU 88 bomber flying from starboard to port. He ran to the forward port side 20MM, #2 gun. As the JU 88 crossed in front of the 414's bow, Harris, unassisted on the gun, tracked the JU 88 and emptied a whole canister of 20 MM rounds at the plane. The JU 88 burst into flames and crashed into the sea several hundred yards away near the USS Ancon. Harris would later be awarded the Bronze Star with this action. With all the excitement, his shipmates teased him, saying that he would not be able to sleep that night. Seaman 1st Class Roland Harris "slept like a baby." So ended D Day for the LCIs.



Crew of LCI(L) 537

The next morning, Commander T.S. Cameron transferred from his Flotilla 12 Flagship, LCI 414 to LCI 538. Leaving LCIs 414 and 420 behind, Cameron led the remainder of Group 35 to England where they would receive orders to transport many more troops to the Normandy coast in the weeks and months to come.

On June 11th, at 0900, Mr. Sherry onboard LCI 415, arrived at Omaha Beach after escorting fourteen LCTs from England. After receiving new orders, Mr. Sherry and Ensign Nuse took a small boat to shore where they took a tour of the beachhead. Mr. Sherry noted at least fifty tents with red crosses on them that comprised a large field hospital. There were two large wire enclosures containing German prisoners of war. Mr. Sherry visited a German artillery emplacement that overlooked the beach and LCI 416, sunk at the stern. Roads were constructed from the beach to the top of the ridge. A landing strip had been constructed on top of the ridge and aircraft were taking off and landing. Sappers were stacking mines they had cleared. Sea Bees with bulldozers cleared wreckage off the beach. What Mr. Sherry did not know was that his crewman, Electricians Mate 1st Class Arthur Virgil Shields was buried that same day in a nearby temporary cemetery constructed on the ridge above the beach. Shields had died from his wound the night of D Day, June 6th. Without this knowledge, Mr. Sherry wrote to Betty that night and told her that he just finished his after-action report for D Day and that he would send her a copy. Mr. Sherry's after action report dated June 9, 1944 states in part "...at present writing, he (Shields) is missing from ship's company".

On June 13th, Mr. Sherry again wrote Betty.

He informed her "I am afraid that we have lost Shields. I have told the officers but have not told the crew yet since all hope is not lost". Mr. Sherry went on to describe the details of Shields on the beach and the shrapnel wound he received. Mr. Sherry was hopeful and wrote "The doctors can do wonderful things, just the same, and maybe they have with him". Mr. Sherry got his information from his friend John Boyce, the Skipper of LCI 420 who had spoken to Ensign Nave from LCI 416. Mr. Sherry also wrote Betty that Boyce had told him the story about threatening to arrest "Stinker Brown" for interfering with the operations LCI 420. Mr. Sherry enclosed in the letter a silk handkerchief that Lt. Col. Corley had given him. The handkerchief was a map of France issued to American pilots in case they were shot down.

On June 30th, Mr. Sherry noted in the LCI 415 muster roll that Shields had been missing since June 6th when he left the ship to rescue drowning soldiers, that he had been wounded and removed from the beach by medical personnel for further treatment.

The ugly news finally caught up to Mr. Sherry. In a recommendation for an "Appropriate Award" typed on August, 15, 1944, Mr. Sherry, described in detail the heroics of Electricians mate 1st Class Arthur Virgil Shields on June 6th. Mr. Sherry wrote that the Bureau of Navy Personnel had notified Mrs. Shields that her husband was killed in action. Aside from Shield's heroics, Mr. Sherry noted that "Shields was the leading petty officer aboard this ship. During all his time with us he contributed much to the crew by his attention to duty and his manliness". The recommendation was an articulate and fitting tribute to Shields. Mr.

Sherry's recommendation for an appropriate award for Shields was followed by a second endorsement on September 1, 1944 by Group 35 Group Commander Clinton Bleeker Duma Brown. Lt. Commander Brown noted that the Army Graves Registration Service recorded that "Shields died 6 June 1944 and was buried 11 June 1944". Brown took his recommendation further in that he recommended Shields for the Medal of Honor. Brown noted that "Shields' service record discloses his voluntary enlistment in the naval service 8 December 1941. Attention is invited to this fact as being significantly in keeping with his subsequent record and his gallantry on the day of the invasion of Normandy."

On September 27, 1944, Flotilla 12 Commander T.S. Cameron approved an "Appropriate Award" for Shields in a third endorsement and on October 5, 1944, V. E. Kohns, Commander, Amphibious Bases, United Kingdom "Forwarded recommending award of the Navy Cross." Finally, on November 11, 1944, George B. Wilson, Chief of Staff Twelfth Fleet, forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy: "The Commander of Twelfth Fleet concurs with the fourth endorsement". So went the tedious procedure to honor the hero Arthur Virgil Shields.

In 1948, the remains of American servicemen were transferred from the temporary cemetery at St. Laurent, Normandy to the permanent cemetery at Colleville, Normandy. Next of kin were notified and asked if they wanted their loved ones buried in Colleville, above Omaha Beach or returned to the United States. The remains of Signalman 3rd Class John Arthur Hawkins, LCI 416, killed on Fox Green beach, June 6, 1944, was interned at the Normandy American Cemetery, Plot I,

Row 5, Grave 30. The remains of Electricians Mate 1st Class Arthur Virgil Shields was returned to the United States and interred January 26, 1949 at the Golden Gate National Cemetery, Plot J, 914, San Bruno, San Mateo County, California. His tombstone, lists the date of his death erroneously as June 7, 1944 just as the tombstone of John Hawkins, a testament to the confusion on D Day. Shields' plain white tombstone, sadly, makes no mention of the Navy Cross that he was awarded posthumously for his heroics.

There is no known grave for Pharmacist Mate Louis Wilkowski, who assisted Shields, Nave and Evans to evacuate the wounded Edward Goss from the stricken LCI 416. After WWII, he enlisted in the Army as a medic. Although he had two young sons – Jeffrey and Kenneth, and a pregnant wife - Grace, he set sail for Korea, to another war. He was listed as missing in action November 25, 1950, four days after his third son - Gregory was born. It was another sad ending for a brave crewman of LCI 416.

The heroics of Wilkowski, Shields, Nave and Evans to save MoMM 3rd Class Edward Goss were not in vain. Goss was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds sustained on D Day and he survived the war. He returned to his childhood home in Swansea, Massachusetts where he spent the rest of his days. He was married twice – first to a woman 25 years his senior and then to a woman 23 years his junior. He retired after a career as a tool and die maker and he passed away on his 79th birthday 04/26/2004. His wife Judith said that he never talked about the war but when he died, he still had German shrapnel in his leg.

Lt. (jg) John Forby "Mr. Sherry" Schereschewsky returned to his wife Betty in

Connecticut. He said little about the war. He raised a family. He was beloved and revered by family, friends, students and professional associates. He motored on peaceful waters in his pleasure boat named "Easy Red". He was the Head Master of the Rumsey House School until he died of a heart attack February 2, 1969. The Harvard man had a good life.

Lt. Commander Clinton Bleecker Duma Brown returned to the United States and settled down in Washington, D.C with his wife Nona. He never discussed the war with Nona. He worked first as a staff lawyer for the Armed Services Committee and then had a long career as a lawyer with the Justice Department. He and Nona did not have any children. Nona was a reporter for 34 years with the New York Times. They traveled abroad frequently and they had many adventures. Nona described in her memoirs published 2012, that her life with Brown as a "happy marriage." Brown died of heart failure Feb 1, 1996 and his ashes were buried without fanfare as per his request in Nona's family plot in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The Yale man had a good life.

When Clinton Brown died in 1996, his wife Nona found in his personal papers a letter written by Clinton Brown a month after D Day. The letter was intended for Nona but was never mailed. The letter covered in detail the plight and heroics of Arthur Shields on D Day and his exemplary performance of duties prior to D Day. In the letter, Brown was critical of Mr. Sherry for not submitting a recommendation for an award for Shields. Brown noted that Mr. Sherry had been in correspondence with Lt. Col. Corley who advised Mr. Sherry that he was recommending Shields for a Silver Star medal. Brown expressed frustration that Mr.

Sherry had not recommended Shields for an award because Lt. Col. Corley had said that he had already done so. Brown was concerned that a recommendation a month after D Day could be too late due to changes in command and a possible quota for certain awards. Brown intended to remedy the problem as soon as he received the letter of recommendation letter from Mr. Sherry. Brown expressed his desire to push through a recommendation for the Medal of Honor for Shields. In the letter, he pleaded with Nona to look out for any recommendation for award for Shields that would show up at Navy Headquarters in Washington, D.C. where Nona was assigned. Brown urged Nona to do what she could do about pushing through the recommendation without getting herself in a fix. The letter was all about doing what was right to honor Shields. Brown, during time of war was criticized by officers under his command, and perhaps with good reason. However, regards to Arthur Virgil Shields, the Yale man did right.

Arthur Virgil Shields was one of only three men awarded the Navy Cross for actions on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944. The French further honored him by awarding him the Croix De Guerre.

Dedicated to

Howard "Tiny" Clarkson, LCI 537



Sources:

Interviews with Harold G. Ashworth, LCI 420, Steve Besse, LCI 420, Leo Berg, LCI 416, John Leffingwell, LCI 416, John Jeffries, LCI 538, John "Jack" Schmidt, LCI 538, Doyle Eugene Wingard, LCI 415, Roland Thomas Harris, LCI 414 and Judith Goss, wife of Edward Goss, LCI 416.

After Action Report of Ensign Melvel Wayne Duncan, Executive Officer, LCI 537 from www.Fold3.com.

WWII Navy Muster Rolls reference LCIs of Group 35, Flotilla 12, from www.Fold3.com.

WWII Navy Casualty Lists reference Arthur Virgil Shields, LCI 415 and John Arthur Hawkins, LCI 416, from www.Fold3.com.

After Action Report of Lt. (jg) John Forby Schereschewsky, Commanding Officer, LCI 515 and letters sent home to wife Betty, provided by daughter Lisa Stout.

After Action Report of Lt. (jg) Ahlert D. Wolff, Commanding Officer, LCI 401 from www.Fold3.com.

History of USS LCI 542 by Lt. Frederick R. Van Vechten, Jr., Navy Department Library, from www.Fold3.com.

Jon L. Strupp, author of *King of the Oilers, The Story of the USS Chiwawa AO-68*. Provided information regards to Pharmacist Mate Louis Wilkowski, LCI 416 and Arthur Virgil Shields, LCI 415 and his Navy Cross.

Phil Nordyke, author of "American Heroes of World War II, Normandy June, 6, 1944". Provided all recommendations for award for Arthur Virgil Shields from Lt. (jg) John Forby Schereschewsky, Commanding Officer, LCI 415; Lt. Commander Clinton Brown, Commander, LCI Group 36; Commander T.S. Cameron, Commander, LCI Flotilla 12; V.E. Kohns, Commander Amphibious Bases, UK; George B. Wilson, Chief of Staff, Commander 12th Fleet.

"Through The Opening Doors" by Nona Baldwin Brown, wife of Clinton Brown, Commander LCI Group 35, Flotilla 12.

Personal papers of Nona Baldwin Brown, from Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard, University. Provided letter written by Lt. Commander Clinton Brown reference Arthur Virgil Shields.

American Battlefield Commission, The World War II Honor Roll, reference John Arthur Hawkins, Signalman Third Class, U.S. Navy, Normandy American Cemetery.

Alec Bennett, Historian, American Battlefield Commission reference temporary burial of Arthur Virgil Shields in St. Laurent, Normandy and permanent internment at Golden Gate National, Cemetery, San Mateo County, California.

26th RCT, Field Order No. 4, Neptune, Troop List and Assignment of Personnel to Ships. Provided by Andrew E. Woods, Research Historian, Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center, First Division Museum at Cantigny.

Dennis Blocker provided document confirming Arthur Virgil Shields served on LCI 27 (L) and was awarded the Croix De Guerre.



Ensign Steve Besse, with the D-Day Battle Flag of the LCI 420

Attention LCI Sailors “*Play it again Sam*”

If in the past you had sent in stories of your WW II service aboard your LCI, and it has not been published in the *Elsie Item*, we are asking you to please send it in again.

You see when the Board took over from our contractor Nehemiah Inc., they did not provide us with the files of previous stories you sent in. We are sorry for any inconvenience but we do want your stories and your history. Can't promise that we can fit all of them in the *Elsie Item*, but if not we will make sure your story gets into the LCI Archives, or on the LCI website.

LCI National Assn. Needs You

We are looking for a volunteer to edit the *Elsie Item*. The job consists of receiving and writing articles of interest the LCI sailors and their families. The magazine ranges from 24 pages to 36 (this edition.) The current length is due to the article on Normandy, a 15-year research project. Most issues are 24 pages.

This quarterly magazine is prepared in Word format, then converted to PDF for the printer. You would have help in this effort, as I have, from some computer savvy Board members from both the LCI Assn. and the AFMM – LCI 713.

The PDF is emailed to the Printer along with a membership list furnished by our Treasurer. It is then printed and mailed to member's nationwide.

So any Associate members willing to give it a try? And members, look around; do you have a family member willing to take part? The compensation? The heartfelt thanks of WW II veterans and a worthy entry in your resume, as editor of a National magazine.

Email: Joe Flynn, joeglo@msn.com

If you have not paid
Your 2017 dues, this will
Be your last issue.

Your dues and your year-
end gifts to the
Association allow us to
continue to serve all of
our members.

And gift memberships
to family members will aid
the Association and will
help share the
legacy of the LCI's.

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Howell, MI
48844-0407



2017 LCI National Association Reunion Announcement Portland Oregon May 14-16, 2017



Hello LCI Shipmates and friends,

Its reunion time again! We hope you can make room in your schedules to come spend some time with your old shipmates. The 2017 reunion is scheduled to be held at the Oxford Suites in Portland, Oregon. Our friends at the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum and the LCI-713 are sponsoring the event.

- *This announcement is advance notice so you can put the dates on your schedule. The formal announcement with signup sheet and costs will be in the first quarter 2017 Elsie.*

Sunday, May 14

Arrival and registration from 5-8:00pm in the Hotel Lobby.

Monday, May 15

- 8:00am Registration
- 9:00am Business meeting
- 10:00am Memorial Service
- 1:00pm-5:00pm Columbia River Scenic Tour
We will carpool 30 miles up into the Columbia River Gorge for a one to two hour cruise on the Columbia Gorge Sternwheeler
- 6:00pm Informal group dinner outing

Tuesday, May 16

- 10:00am – 2:00pm LCI-713 Tours
The volunteers on the LCI-713 will be on hand for tours of the LCI-713 and PT-658. We will carpool on down from the hotel. There will be Navy Bean soup, plenty of coffee and good conversation.
- 5:00pm -9:00pm Banquet Dinner
Starting with a social hour, then Color guard, pledge, Opening remarks, Dinner then Guest speaker.

The reunion officially concludes after the dinner.

We hope to see all of you there! If you cannot attend, send a note. Tell us what is happening in your life and so we can all know how our friends who could not make the reunion trip this year are faring. Please feel free to contact Rick Holmes with any questions.

Sincerely,

Rick Holmes, AFMM President Email: afmm@amphibiousforces.org Phone: 541-226-5427	John France, LCI National Assn. President Email: lc540@aol.com Phone: 520-429-3792
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The Reunion will be held at the Oxford Suites at Jantzen Beach in Portland, OR..Located at exit 308 on the east side of Interstate 5. They offer an Airport Shuttle service and a complimentary breakfast.

Reunion Rates: Studio Double Queen Suite - \$ 109, Studio King Suite - \$115

Website: www.oxfordsuitesportland.com

Phone: 503-283-3030



The Columbia Gorge Sternwheeler

The Columbia River is a river of stories. Experience the history, and the legends, of the Columbia River Gorge and learn about the Native Americans and the Lewis and Clark Expedition on a cruise aboard the Columbia Gorge Sternwheeler. Boarding is at Marine Park in Cascade Locks, in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

Website: www.portlandspirit.com/sternwheeler.php

Phone: 503-224-3900



And, of course, the LCI-713!

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

HOPE For Today and Tomorrow

NASB Psalm 42: 1, 2, 5, 11
Romans 10:17 James 1:17
Isaiah 45:22 Psalm 31:24
Malachi 3:6

As a Chaplain I feel the subject of hope is appropriate anytime. In today's environment there seems to be a lack of hope expressed in a number of ways. We see evidence in the excessive use of drugs, alcohol, the need to be excessively entertained, the need to improve on our physical bodies in the gym. Out of these-good or bad-may point to something to fill an undefined emptiness or to obtain a sense of fulfillment. The need to continue these temporal things do not give complete satisfaction.

We may live with a hope that things will get better; or some may give up on life, reasoning that hopelessness is our present and future destiny. Without selecting one particular practice, I see a search for hope and complete satisfaction.

In the churches that I have been part of we used to sing "My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." The last line of this stanza we would change to read "All other rocks are SHAM rocks."

Verse 2 "When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil..." by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

We can place our faith in government. But we know political promises and any other human entity, though well intended, fails to provide hope so some become discouraged, disillusioned and even suicidal. I believe all the things described in this attempt to put hope in perspective are a thirst for hope.

Psalm 42 describes the desire "for hope" and the source. :1 "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you O God." :2 "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" :5, 11 "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence."

The psalmist indicates that his source of hope is God. That has never changed because we have a God who never changes. He tells us in the Bible (his word) Malachi 3:6 "For I, the Lord, do not change." (He is immutable).

Do I want hope or the faith to believe? Read the Bible; it is God's communication to us.

In Romans 10:17 it says "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God our creator and sustainer is the God of hope. The Apostle James in Chapter 1:17 of his epistle tell us "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights (God), with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." God himself invites all of us as follows:

Isaiah 45:22 "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Psalm 31:24 "Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the Lord". He is our source of HOPE. We can depend on Him. He has a perfect track record; because he is omnipotent, (all Powerful), Omniscient (knows all), Omnipresent (always present) and above all He is Holy and Eternal.

Ebenezer (I Samuel 7:12)

RM-1/C Abe Lorenzo LCI 47, 409



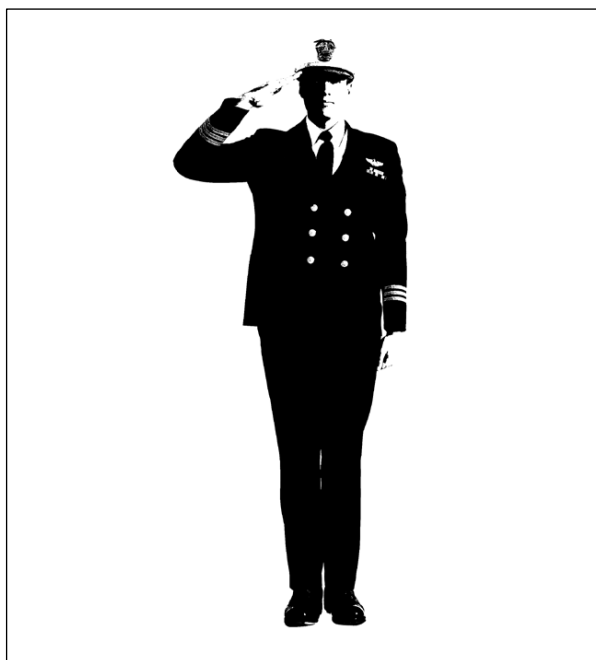
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LCI 13
James Peters
LCI 21
James Lorah
LCI 31
Harold MacCombie
LCI 37
Angelo Ranaudo
LCI 44
Theodore Wajek
LCI 62
Francis Abba
LCI 69
John Katon
LCI 74
Ed Benoit
LCI 74
Albert Sackett
LCI 77
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John Gatton
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LCI 226
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LCI 337
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Lawrence Oana
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Thank You for Your Membership and Support

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Dennis Blocker

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Attention LCI Veterans and Associates:

Want to tell your story? Write or email Joe Flynn (See Contact Information Above).

USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

C/O Robert E. Wright, Jr. Treasurer

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Howell, MI 48844-0407



Gone Fishin’: From left: Chief Radar Tech. WM. H. Bell, Ensign J. W Fanz, Chief Signalman J.J. Hrazdil, and Ship's cook W.H. Porter, holding Mascot dog Trixie.

Ship LCI(FF) 988 , Flotilla Flag for an LCS(L)(3) Flotilla Pacific, circa late 1945