

2017 June



Elsie Item

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

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“The Elsie Item”

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Official publication of the USS LCI National Association, a non-profit veteran's organization. Membership in the USS LCI National Association is open to any U.S. Navy or U.S. Coast Guard Veteran who served aboard a Landing Craft Infantry, to anyone related to an LCI veteran, or to anyone interested in the history of LCIs.

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

We are always looking for stories and memories of your LCI service. If writing is a chore, draft one of your young relatives. If they are a student, perhaps they could also do a paper on your wartime experiences. So, whatever it takes, get it down and send it in. We need your history.

Stories/ Letters

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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 do not permit the ability to check each story, therefore, we rely on the author to research each article.

Correction:

The *In Memorium* page last issue, listed Robert DeViney as serving on LCI 612 and 457. DeViney actually, served on LCI 457 and 566. He was part of the commissioning of LST 612 before transferring to LCI duty. We regret the error.

President's Corner



Another successful reunion is behind us. We had a great turn out in Portland and the time with our LCIers was precious. The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum -AFMM and crew of LCI 713 were wonderful hosts. They agreed to host our reunion again next year!

In this Elsie Item there is a request for artifacts from the AFMM LCI 713 and LSIL 1091 Museums. I believe that Historical artifacts of LCIers should be handed down to descendants who will cherish and preserve them. Those recipients of artifacts have the responsibility to identify the next descendant to bequeath the heirlooms. For example, my father gave me a German helmet that he found on Omaha Beach. I bequeathed it to my son. The helmet is where it should be.

But what happens when you do not have a descendant? What happens when you have a descendant who is not interested in caring for the artifact? I interviewed an LCIer years ago who was in failing health. He had only one descendant who he noted “did not give a damn” about his LCI legacy. That LCIer gave me his copy of the history of LCI Flotilla 2 and many priceless photographs from the war. Others, not wanting to part with priceless artifacts, such as the complete plans for the invasion of Normandy or personal journal of an LCI Skipper, have allowed me to make copies of the documents. These are invaluable as a historian for the Association. I have been given manuscripts of LCIers that are too large to publish in the Elsie Item but can be presented in full when our new LCI web site is complete.

Our Association is comprised of LCIers, their families, loved ones and supporters. We collect photographs, diaries, after action reports, war time letters and other documents that help us write the stories of the LCIers. These stories are archived on our Association web site. Please keep sending me that material.

The AFMM LCI 713 and LSIL (LCI) 1091 are *museums* that are equipped to house and display things – artifacts. When I received an LCI battle flag, I forwarded it to the AFMM so it could be displayed on LCI 713. That is where such artifacts need to go so they can be shared with the public. Please consider sending your artifacts to the AFMM LCI 713 or LSIL (LCI) 1091. They will take good care of your artifacts and save them from the trash heap.

John France, President
USS LCI National Association

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

NASB

Philippians 4:13, Phil 4:13, Matt 14:25-29,
Psalms 27:1, Psalm 148:18, Acts 2:21.

After my recent visit to the LCI 713 and attending the National reunion my mind recalled a poem by Edgar Albert Guest, "It Couldn't Be Done" published in 1917. It seems to fit the dedicated and tireless work done by those involved in the restoration of LCI 713. So, I dedicate Edgar Guest's words to you who have dedicated your mental and physical resources to the establishment of the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum.

Somebody said that it couldn't be done

But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one

Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it!

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;

At least no one ever has done it;"
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat

And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,

There are thousands to prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out to you one

by one,

The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

I believe that God approves of the work you are doing to keep the memory of our shipmates alive and if it is a work approved by God, you can say with Paul the Apostle "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". Phil 4:13.

I have a book by John Ortberg titled "You Can't Walk on Water Unless Get Out of the Boat". The title is based on St Peter's experience recorded in Matt 14:25-29. This reminds me of my shipmates doing the work of restoring the LCI 713. They step out and with the help of God perform what some might say "You'll never do that. At least, no one has ever done it." As I think of this, my mind goes to what the Bible says as follows: King David in Psalms 27:1 said "The Lord is my strength and salvation." Psalm 148:18 says "The Lord is near to all who call on Him." St. Peter who had firsthand experience states in Acts 2:21 "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved". I believe as promised by the Lord God that he has been and will continue to be present and available as our shipmates trust him for wisdom and strength to do what some may have said couldn't be done. Again, I say, keep on with your labor of love. It doesn't go unnoticed.

Ebenezer (I Samuel 7:12)

RM-1/C Abe Laurenzo LCI 47, 409



In Memoriam

Flotilla 20
Otto Bussanmas

LCI (?)
Frank Ricco

LCI 94
Joseph P. Armstrong

LCI 322
Leonard Biedermann

LCI 343
Norman N. Greulich

LCI 440
Richard Saldivar

LCI 451
John Scepanski

LCI 449
William Hildebrand

LCI 457
Dr. Charles Crandall

LCI 513
Charlie Blackburn

LCI 552
John Kimbrough

LCI 557
Walter Phillips

LCI 588
Quinton Taylor

LCI 604
Stuart L. Wien

LCI 638
Byron Drew

LCI 668
Edward R. Fox

LCI 701
Paul Sager

LCI 713
Ramuel I. Wasserman

LCI 727
Bernard Clark

LCI 968
William Dubois



Swords into Plowshares:

Jim McCarthy's life after WWII

Editor's Note. Many members have wondered what happened to all the LCI's after WWII was over. Answers to some of those questions were covered in a 1997 Elsie Item by the late Jim McCarthy. He was a former California State Director and LCI Board Director and strong early supporter of restoration of the LCI 1091 and LCI 713. But for those who were not members in 1997 this article provides answers to a number of questions on LCI history.

When WWII was over and my service on LCI 685 was finished, I went home to Pennsylvania. After two years of college and two winters on the frozen tundra of PA, I decided to relocate to the land of sunshine and surplus ships, southern California.

Arriving in the land of golden opportunity stone broke and uneducated, I met two wheeler-dealers named "One-Eye" Jones and "Red" Garrison. One-Eye had a truck and Red had a leased crane. They were in the scrap business buying surplus landing craft (LCIs) for salvage and scrap. The salvage was sold at the scrap site and the scrap iron was loaded onto railroad gondola cars bound for Kaiser Steel Mills at Fontana, CA.

One-Eye and Red would deal with Navy Surplus Sales, bidding on LCI hulls; AS IS, WHERE IS. The hulls were towed to various cutting sites usually away from the eyes of the Coast Guard and local fire departments. Thank God there was no OSHA, if there was, we would still be writing a safety program.

At times the hulls would have the main engines (quads) and the 2 cylinder and 3 cylinder generators and most of the running gear. The guns had been removed as well as compasses and other "high value gear."

Our first act was to sell the diesel oil, lube oil, and fog oil from the tanks. The bilges would be pumped dry by the oil re-claimers. Any loose material was sold to waiting customers.

Then we would recruit a crew of burners. This operation resembled the old days of press gangs and shanghaied workers. After extensive training, consisting of how to light a torch and how to aim a torch, we were ready. A crew of "GRUNTS" were hired for \$3.00 a day to strip fiberglass and pipe laggings so the burners would have clean cutting and Kaiser would have clean scrap.

The first priority was to cut through the aft gun deck and through the main deck to have access to the engine room. The Quads and the diesel generators were removed. Buyers for various oil companies were dockside to buy the quads. They were ideal power plants for oil drilling rigs. The price they paid for the engines and generators would at times cover our hull purchase cost. After that everything was gravy, less labor and management costs.

All brass and glass ports were salvaged as well as any "valuable metals." The conn and pilot house were cut loose and placed on the beach for further cutting to fit in the rail cars. The gun tubs were removed in a similar way. The bow deck gun, the bow winch, were removed as was the stern winch. The winches with their Chrysler Industrial Engines were a fast seller. The deck houses were cut into "long iron" pieces 40' to 50' by 10' to fit in the railroad gondola cars. After the deck house was removed, the main deck was cut around the perimeter leaving the center beam and certain connections uncut. Then from compartment to compartment the uncut sections were cut allowing the decks to crash into the tank deck. The crashed pieces were

further reduced into manageable pieces to be placed on the beach or directly onto rail cars.

Valves, pipes, and other salvageable materials were cut to buyer's specifications and sold on the spot. Those horrible electric cables and wires were removed and piled on the beach. We would then saturate the pile with diesel oil and "burn the pile." After the ashes cooled, the grunts would whip the incinerated cables over a steel sawhorse. The insulation and outer wire mesh would fall away, leaving the thin copper center wire, a valuable metal.

As you know, the more you cut from the hull the higher it rises in the water, up to a point. We had two ways of removing the hull that was cut to the water line. The first was to wait for high tide, and have One-Eye's truck and Red's crane hooked to the bow and pull as much of the hull up on the beach – then as the tide went out, cut like crazy and drag the pieces to higher ground. The second, and more sensible way was to hire two large floating cranes to lift the hull onto the beach and slice the hull into manageable pieces for transport to the steel mills.

About the dumbest thing that One-Eye, Red and I did, was to NOT chronicle the dozens of ship numbers. I did have photos of the 642, 732, and the 1057 in various stages of LCI scrapping.

During my after-war years I helped convert LCI's to river exploration boats and some to small coastal freighters.

The coastal freighters would load hardware and non-perishable dry goods from San Diego or Los Angeles destined for ports in Mexico or Central America, ports larger freighters would not call on. I sailed one converted LCI freighter, "The MV El Taybac" home ported

in Corinto, Nicaragua. Hauling beer to Mexico and pineapples to Los Angeles. There were other LCI's plying the west coast waters. Some with exotic names like MV Banana King, MV Banana Queen, MV Banana Princess –and if you haven't guessed, these LCI's hauled bananas to the US.

After this second go-round with LCI's I decided it was time to get serious, get married and get a life. Now my third go-round with LCI's is as the California State Director and a Board Member of the National USS LCI Association. Never could shake the LCI mystique.

Author: Jim McCarthy of LCI 685 MoMM1/c



LCI's 347, 385, 454 and 72, at the dock in San Diego after the War, in 1945 awaiting decommissioning. Photo courtesy of W.F Sorsby, Skipper of LCI 347

Some of these ships were scrapped as in the article above, but the LCI 347 was, according to Skipper W. Fred Sorsby, sunk off the coast of San Diego in Naval gunnery practice. Likely resting place is beyond the Nine Mile Bank off Point Loma in 600 fathoms.

Jim McCarthy told me that at some reunions he ran into LCI sailors, "who were madder than hell" that he had scrapped their ship. Jim merely suggested, "if you were that interested you could have bought it, like I did." *Editor*

Del Hollinger “Our Travelling Man”

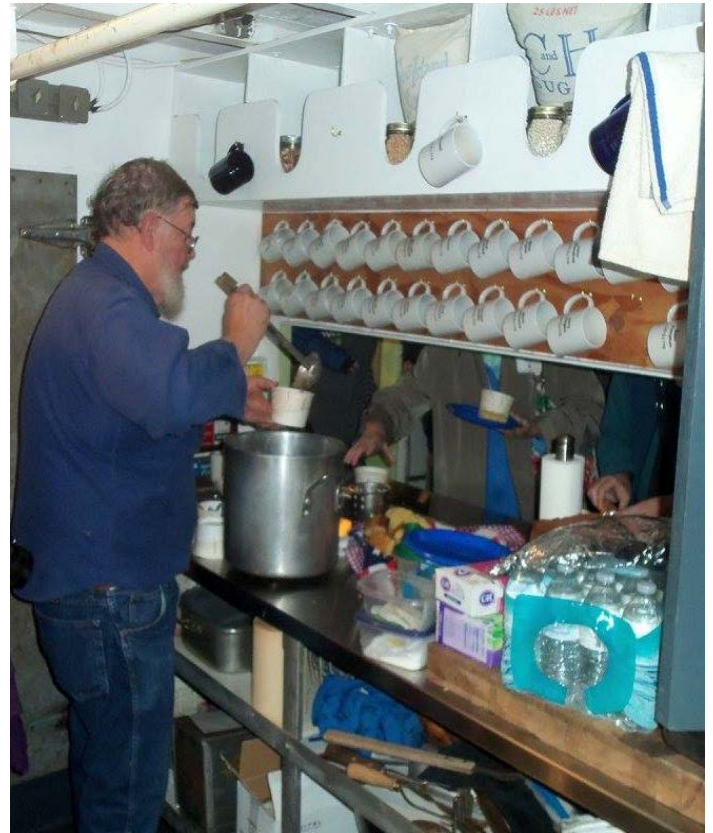


Delbert Hollinger, LCI(G) 470 at Portland reunion, aboard the LCI(L) 713. It was Del’s lucky day; he got to go aboard the 713 and waiting for him there in the Museum room was a model by Carl Chapple of the ship he served on in WW II, the LCI(L) 470.

Del is our travelling man. For our last reunion, he drove 2,500 miles from his home in Pismo Beach, CA, New Orleans, pulling a 30-foot travel trailer. This time he drove up to Portland pulling a Fifth Wheel. While there, Del had a chance to visit his 108-year-old aunt! And on his way home, he stopped off in Eureka, CA to have breakfast with Ralph Davis and tour the LSIL 1091.

After serving on the 470 in WW II, Del wasn’t through with sailing on the high seas. A waterman at heart, he and his wife, just the two of them, sailed from California to Hawaii, not once but twice. On one of those trips on the night watch Del spotted a freighter bearing down on them. There was a short in wiring for the running lights so Del broke out his searchlight and flashed it across the bridge of the freighter. It worked, and slowly, the big ship turned away. I am sure that Del’s first chore next day was fixing those running lights.

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“Soup’s On!”

In the Galley of the 713, Rich Lovell is seen serving up a hot bowls of Navy Bean Soup for the Reunion guests who were touring the 713. He made a triple batch of Gordon Smith’s Navy Bean recipe, and it disappeared in a heartbeat. When it was gone, it looked like a scene from *Oliver Twist* with LCI sailors and guests standing around with empty bowls, saying, “Please Sir, may I have some more?”

Unfortunately, it was all gone, but never fear; since I had savored this soup before, I anticipated that there would be a clamor for the recipe, so I printed that Navy Bean Soup recipe in the March 2017 issue of the *Elsie Item*, on page 20. Check it out.

Rich is the Vice Pres. of the AFMM and at this reunion was also elected as Vice Pres. of the USS LCI National Assn. But his other job is restoring the 713 Galley and feeding the volunteers on Saturday work days. And I am sure that Navy Bean Soup is a favorite. *Ed.*

Portland LCI Reunion 2017

The registered guests began arriving in Portland on Saturday and Sunday, a day or two early to get set for the 2017 USS LCI National reunion. The weather cooperated with light rain clearing by noon on Sunday allowing some early arrivals to catch the hotel shuttle to a nearby shopping center. Phil and Joy Reed checked in early too. I went out to see if they drove up in one of Phil's classic cars. No luck. He said they flew.

Rich Holmes and Sue Cosper went all out to make the LCI veterans and their families feel welcome and loaded their registration packets with information. And, Sue, in an above the call of duty effort, included in each LCI Veteran's packet a framed photo of their LCI. On Sunday, since May 14 was Mother's Day, Sue had assembled a gift box of sweets for each of the ladies. Rick and Sue had also created a video of amphibious landing scenes featuring the LCI's of all attendees. This video was shown continually in the hospitality room where our Portland AFMM hosts had lined up a full table of LCI photos. The hospitality room had photos galore.

And the family of Roland Ellingson not only brought photos of their father's LCI, they brought some of his uniforms. Having spent some time in China, LCI veteran Ellingson had the inside of his jumper and the inside of the sleeve cuffs ornately embroidered. (photos elsewhere in this magazine.)

On the other side of the Hospitality room, Capt. Ralph Davis, former owner of the 1091 in Eureka had a display and photos showing the ship now hauled up on land. Restoration continues under a new board of directors.

On Monday, the weather outside held and inside there was a meeting of the membership. A summary of minutes from the New Orleans reunion was read and approved by voice vote. Treasurer Robert E. Wright Jr. gave a financial report, containing good news for the members. A year end accounting is scheduled for the September Elsie Item.

We also had the election of officers. John France agreed to serve another year. Joe Flynn, always willing to share, stepped down from Vice President and Secretary and agreed to continue as a Board member and continue editing the Elsie Item. For Vice President, we had two candidates, Rich Lovell, Director for the LCI Assn., and Vice Pres. of AFMM; and Robert Wright, current Treasurer and LCI Assn. Director. This rare occurrence required a secret vote by the members. Ballots were distributed, members voted, and ballots were collected and counted by Mike Pikos, Board Director and Joe Flynn. In a very close election, Rich Lovell was elected Vice President of the LCI National Association. Robert Wright will continue as Treasurer.

The remaining unanimous vote was to confirm Pete Selan, LCI Board Director as the new Secretary of the Association.

Memorial Service Portland 2017

The Memorial Service followed the business meeting after a brief intermission. President John France opened the Service. Chaplain Abe Laurenzo, LCI 409 gave the Call to Worship and the Opening Prayer. The poem "Sailor's Rest" was read followed by the Litany of Remembrance. The names of our departed shipmates were read and as the Bell was tolled by Sue Cosper, of AFMM, as family and friends of the departed stood in silent salute. After the names were read, Piper Geffery Frasier played Amazing Grace, always a soulful tune, and especially so on the Bagpipes. Chaplain Laurenzo then gave the final Benediction to end a solemn ceremony.



Piper Geffery Fraiser at USS LCI Memorial Service, Portland, OR May 14, 2017.

the Newswire

Wire Photos and Captions from Press Releases during WWII

It was the first time the Landing Craft Infantry were deployed in an amphibious operation in the South Pacific. General MacArthur selected these islands because he correctly believed that they were lightly defended and the Japanese had a developed airbase. He wanted this to enable the Army Air Corp to protect his flanks and provide air cover for the planned invasion at Lae on September 4 1943.

This news photo was released to the Public August 9, 1943.



--Human Chain Unloads Supplies on Woodlark--A double line of U.S. soldiers pass supplies along from a LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) assault boat on the beach of Woodlark island after troops from the New Guinea area took the island from the Japs. *--AP from the United States Navy--*

An interesting observation is that the United States flag flying from the LCI(L).-26 has been added to the photo.

Contributed by Robert Wright, Jr.

Portland Reunion Photos



Jane Olley, Gloria Flynn and Ray Olley LSM 311 are shown in the hospitality room sampling Pennsylvania Baloney & Cheese sent by Royal Wetzel.



Dr. John and Carol Stanley, LCI 958, boarding bus



Jack Walters, LCI 668 holds on to his helmet as Pete Selan, mans the 40 mm at the PT 658 Boat exhibit.



Smiling Bob McCreary is on a bus load of reunion guests heading for the Steamboat Sternwheeler.



Three generations of Carlin's; son Gene, grandsons Casey Jackson, Brian Carlin and Earl Carlin LCI 472



Vern Malmquist, LCI 948 brought four generations to the Reunion. Back row, Michael Singrey, Jeff and Judy Flanagan (daughter). Front row, granddaughter Leslie Singrey holding great granddaughter Zoe, and proud great grandfather, Vern Malmquist. Hard part was getting Grandma Judy to take her eyes off Zoe.



LeRoy Olsen, LCI 966 and Ann Koeplin at Famous Dave's BBQ. LeRoy and Jim McCarthy (dec.) created the LCI Calendars we all know and love.



Steady as she goes; LCI Board Director Emeritus Gordon Smith, MC's the Portland Reunion Banquet



Family of Roland Ellingson, LCI 1033. From left Bobbie Ellingson Sonnenberg, husband Alan; and Jim Ellingson and wife Georgia.

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Karo Thom, Joe Flynn, and *Belle of the Ball*, Marlene Yandell, widow of Burton Yandell, LCI 64.



From the LSIL 1091, Ruth, Bobbi Jo and Ralph Davis



Robert Bansky, LCI 958, with daughter Nancy and her husband Joe Anderson, at banquet.



Mark Stevens, N. Guard Museum Vol.; Dave McKay, Sr., LCI 30-639, and Dave McKay Jr. of AFMM.



Under the LCI Flag, Robert Wright, LCI 1059 and wife Natalie, at LCI Banquet.



Chaplain Abe Laurenzo and wife Esther at banquet their 69th Wedding Anniversary is coming up soon.

God Bless America



LCI Director Michael Pikos, and LCI Director Emeritus Gordon Smith and wife Sharon, enjoying their time at Famous Dave's BBQ. The Smiths celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary this year.



Phil Reed, LCI 35 and wife Joy at the Reunion Banquet. They will celebrate their 71st Anniversary in December



Gunner's Mate First Class, Ray Olley, LSM 311, singing *God Bless America* to bring to a perfect close the 2017 USS LCI National Assn., Portland Reunion. Ray and wife Jane in June this year celebrate their 71st Wedding Anniversary.

Dress Code Blues,

By Rod Scurlock, Director Emeritus

One of the things the Navy taught us early was the importance of dress code. We were representatives of the United States and should look the part. We were shown how to press our blues and whites under the mattress, just how to tie our tie, shoes shined, and where the sinks were to wash our clothes.

After days and weeks of calisthenics, marching and learning, we finally got an overnight liberty. We all stood at attention waiting to be released to catch our bus for Athol, ID where we were to catch a train to Spokane. The Chief came down the line inspecting us, and when he got to me he stopped, whipped out his knife and snipped off one of the buttons of my pea coat and said, "Sailor, if you can get that button sewed back on, and this time tight, before the bus leaves you can go on leave." That was one of the fastest sewing jobs ever done, and believe me it was sewn on tight. I barely made the bus.

In service school at Camp Peterson, we were given liberty more often and at times even week-end liberty. Here our inspections were in the barracks. We had to have all our clothes laid out on the bunks all properly folded and our dress blues on and in good order. This was in addition to our barracks shining for a white glove inspection. We stood there at attention, and with the display of our clothing folded on the bunks.

At this time, several of my buddies were wearing tailor-made dress blues. Wide flaring bells on their trousers, form fitting tops, and already tied ties. Wow! Did they look classy? I proceeded to take my dress blues to the tailor shop to get them altered. They were

to be back in time for liberty and I would wow the girls at the USO in Spokane.

Somehow there was a delay; my blues didn't make it back in for the inspection! I was stuck and didn't know what to do. I couldn't stand inspection in my undress blues. I finally laid out my clothes on my bunk in orderly fashion and asked my bunkmate below me and one of the bunkmates in the adjoining bunk to spread out as much as they could in the hope that the inspecting officers wouldn't notice that there was one man missing. Then I went out to the wash house and hid behind the furnace. I expected at least a week in the brig.

Time dragged on as I waited for the inspection to be over. I was dreading going back into the barracks to was sure to be my fate when I got there.

I heard someone come into the washroom and looked around the corner of the furnace. Here was a Chief Bosun, stripes from his ears to his feet, looking like a Bull Dawson from the old comics. He saw me and came over. "What are you doing here Sailor? Don't you know there is an inspection going on?" What in the billy blue do I say now? "Yes, Sir!" "Why aren't you in there?" "Well Sir, I sent my blues to the cleaners and I didn't think I could stand inspection out of uniform."

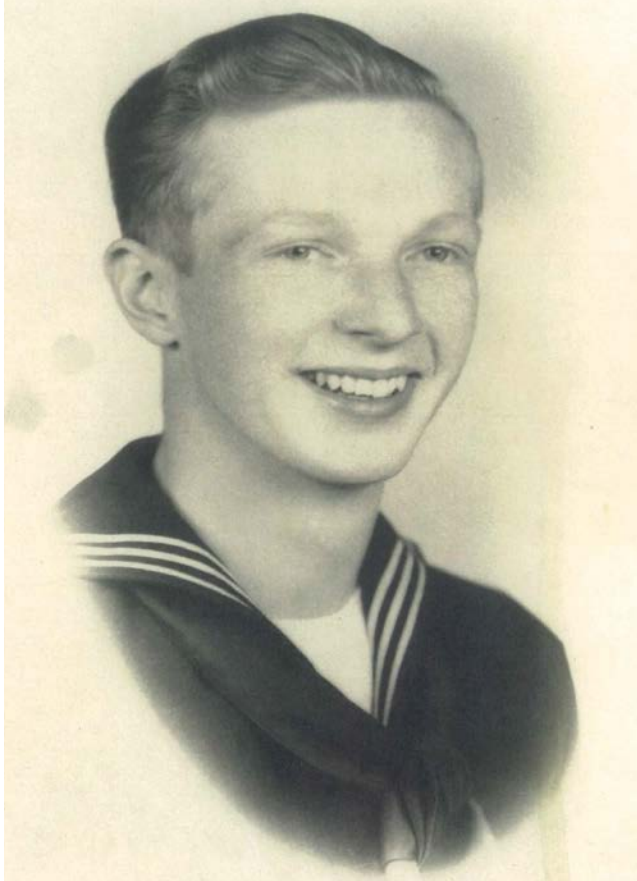
The heavy brow furrowed, he looked down at the floor, put his hands behind his back and studied on it.

I got more and more nervous waiting on what kind of punishment that crusty old Navy man was going to hand me. Finally, he looked up, looked me in the eye and said, "Stay out of sight." Then he turned and walked away. I thought I saw a smile on his lips as he turned.

Success in the search for Father's Shipmates

By Lisa Bittle Tancredi

My father, Robert David Bittle, served aboard the LCI(L) 944. Dad left us many years ago, but I recently started taking an interest in his service with the Navy. The 80-some letters that he wrote to his family during the war were fascinating, but they also made me very curious. The letters had been censored and he took care not to include anything that would identify where he was or what he was doing. He wrote about the day-to-day things that were very interesting but did not form a complete picture of his experiences. There were gaps in time between letters that make me wonder what had happened. Most significant, his letters changed a lot during the course of the war. The initial letters were written by a boy who was off on an adventure. The later letters were written by a much more serious young man. What had changed him?



Robert David Bittle LCI(L) 944

I thought it would help if I knew where he went. I trekked to the National Archives in Greenbelt, Maryland with my daughter. We were able to review the Deck Log of the 944 and write down his "itinerary." That answered some, but not many questions. I joined the LCI National Association and started to search for information on the internet, books, memoirs and oral histories (a continuing effort that is somewhat obsessive, my Husband would say.) Making a last-minute decision, I flew to Oregon to attend the National LCI Reunion in May, where I had the wonderful experience of talking to some veterans and touring the LCI(L) 713. I knew I would most likely not meet anyone who served with my Dad, but I learned a lot, made new friends, and had a great time.

After I returned, I kept on with the search. Last week, to my amazement and joy I saw something new – a picture of one Lt. Ralph M. Rayner and his son, Kerry on the Facebook page of the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum! I recognized his name and saw that the picture had been posted on September 11, 2016. No time to waste! Finding different addresses for him on-line, I sent four identical letters to four addresses. I included all of my contact information and crossed my fingers.

Yesterday the telephone rang, and it was Lt. Rayner! I had the honor and privilege of speaking with him for more than an hour. What a thrill! He remembered Dad and related many interesting things about their time together. He was very kind, gracious and an excellent conversationalist. I can't wait to talk with him again!

*She was designed by a government committee
And when built was more ugly than pretty
With a square stern and round bow
Not a ship not a scow
But a fighting craft oh so gritty.*

Jim McCarthy, LCI 685

Appeal for LCI WW II Artifacts

During the last reunion, a few of us were discussing LCI business when someone suggested having a place to display mementos/artifacts that LCI sailors brought home from the War. Such things as old uniforms, letters, photos, swords, pistols, rifles, shell fragments, flags, books, foreign money or scrip, trench art, native art, and curios with a link to WW II, would be appropriate.

Other Navy veterans have Destroyers, Submarines, Battleships and Carriers to display their memorabilia but LCI's do not have a place for display -- until now. The USS LCI National Assn., is making an appeal to all WW II LCI Veterans and your families to consider donating your War related items to the LCI 713 or the LSIL 1091. Both ships have room to display these items to honor the LCI's and the crews who manned them. So please look through your collections and think about sending them in to be displayed on these LCI's for future generations.

In Fredericksburg, TX, the LCI Assn, has our National LCI Archives in the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War, but these are mainly photos, letters, videos, and books. So, now the request is for these items be donated before they disappear into Estate and Yard sale oblivion.

If you request, the AFMM can send a Museum Acknowledgement and Release Form. Please do not ask for control of these artifacts after donating them, and the AFMM cannot accept items "For Loan" only. Any tax-related valuation must be made by the donor, and the AFMM cannot do appraisals. You can however, take a tax credit for

donations to AFMM since it is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit operation,

The LSIL 1091 Museum is in the process of reorganization and had not completed it's 501(c)3 paperwork at press time. It is anticipated that the process will be completed before the next Elsie Item.

Send Artifact Donations to:

Armed Forces Memorial Museum

Attn: Rick Holmes

P.O. Box 17220

Portland, OR

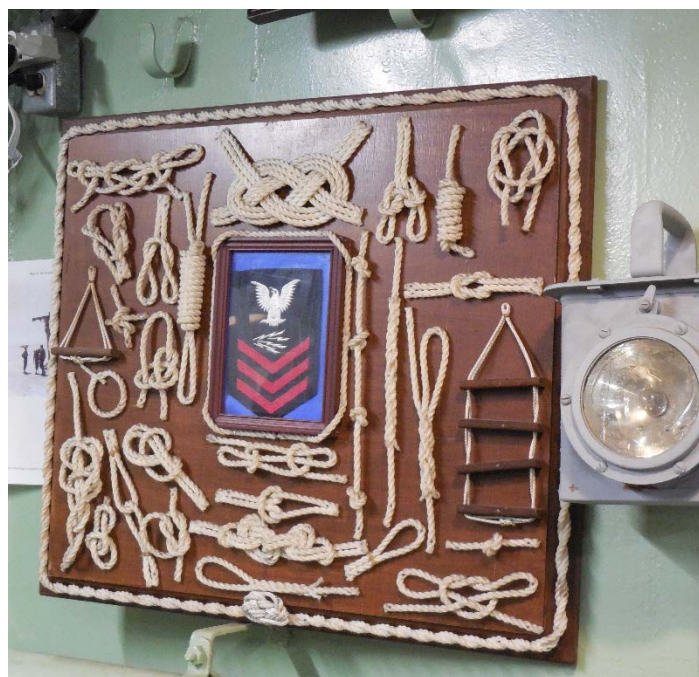
Or

LSIL 1091 Museum Attn:

Ralph Davis

901 Birch Ave.

McKinleyville, CA 95519



This Knot Board is one example of an LCI artifact donated to the AFMM and proudly displayed in the Museum of LCI 713.

Where are your LCI artifacts displayed??

German Cruiser Prinz Eugen in LCI photo in Hawaii By Jerry Gilmartin, AFMM



The family of MoMM2/c Roland C Ellingson, LCI 1033 attended the May LCI National Reunion in Portland OR and placed a photo display of his military service. Among the items displayed was an unlabeled photo (above) of the ship moored in Pearl Harbor.

After the Memorial Service, I contacted his daughter Bobbi Sonnenberg and asked the name of the ship in the photo? Bobbi checked and told me the photo did not have a name on the back but was among her Dad's photos. At once I was intrigued. What I found out was amazing.

Meanwhile back to the mystery ship. Further research revealed this is a rare photograph of USS Prinz Eugen, IX-300, in Pearl Harbor in early March 1946. But wait, that name rings a bell! Isn't the Prinz Eugen actually a GERMAN Heavy Cruiser armed with four twin turrets of 8 inch (203mm) main guns? And why is it flying the US National Ensign from the stern? More questions than answers!

After studying the ships logs for LCI 1033, it seems that Roland spent the end of 1945 in Shanghai, China then left returning to the

USA, arriving in Pearl Harbor in early Feb 1946. There Roland met up with his brother, Wayne, who was also stationed in Hawaii. While in Pearl Harbor, Roland must have come across this old ship and taken her photo. The Prinz Eugen was on her way to be used as a target ship for the first Hydrogen Bomb Test at Bikini Atoll. But how she got to Hawaii and crossed paths with Roland and his LCI 1033 is quite a coincidence!

You may remember hearing about the Prinz Eugen in the story of the Bismarck and the Battle of the Denmark Strait, where between May 23rd and May 28th 1941, During the War the Prinz Eugen escorted the Battleship Bismarck in the Battle of the Denmark Strait. At the end of the war, the German cruiser was surrendered to the British in Copenhagen.

Prinz Eugen was then awarded as a war prize to the United States, and was commissioned in the USN as **USS *Prinz Eugen*** with the hull number IX-300.



Prinz Eugen moored at the Bikini Atoll awaiting the Able Atomic Test

A composite American-German crew consisting of 574 German officers and sailors, supervised by eight American officers and eighty-five enlisted men under the command of Capt. Graubart sailed to Boston, arriving on 22 January 1946. After a month in Boston studying her guns and sonar equipment, the ship was towed to Hawaii, where she had her chance encounter with our LCI1033 and Roland Ellingson.

After Hawaii, the ship survived two atomic bomb blasts: Test Able, an air burst on 1 July 1946 and Test Baker, a submerged detonation on 25 July. In August 1979, one of the ship's screw propellers was retrieved and placed in the Laboe German Naval Memorial in Germany. The ship's bell is currently held at the National Museum of the United States Navy in Washington DC at the Washington Navy Yard.



Roland C. Ellingson, LCI 1033

18 Elsie Item June 2017



Roland Ellingson, LCI 1033 on leave in 1943, riding his \$175, 1935 Harley Davidson, originally a Police Bike. Hope the family kept it; a 1935 Harley now sells for \$15K to \$27K.



You may not recognize Bosun Carl Chapple if he is not holding one of his hand-crafted LCI Models. Carl was a shipmate of Ellingson's on the LCI 1033. For years Carl's models were auctioned off to raise funds for the Assn. *Photos courtesy of Ellingson Family.*

Recollections of WW II Service

by Alfred H. Philipp LCI(L) 961

I joined the Navy on 8/19/43, two months after turning seventeen and just before starting my Senior year in high school. We lived in Shelton, CN at the time and I enlisted at the New Haven Recruiting Office. It's difficult to say why I joined except that people around me were being drafted and I guess I was ready for some adventure in my life. My parents finally signed the consent form after much pleading from me. My brother Eddie was already in the Army serving in the ETO (European Theater of Operations,) with the 3rd Infantry Division.

Boot Camp was in Newport, RI, the only naval base where men slept in hammocks rather than cots. My Boy Scout training was helpful as I was able to assist in the knot-tying and first aid classes. After graduating from Boot Camp, I was sent to Quartermaster school, also in Newport, where I learned the rudiments of navigation, signaling, and other duties required of the Quartermaster rating. This training lasted twelve weeks and I was one of three men promoted to Seaman 1/C. While in Newport I applied for submarine duty and passed all the rigid standards except my blood pressure was slightly high. I guess I got too excited about the prospect of becoming a submariner. They offered me PT Boat duty but I decided to take the luck of the draw, that is, whatever came up.

As it turned out the Navy assigned the entire class to amphibious duty and we were shipped to Solomons, MD for training. It was there that I learned that I would be on an LCI(L) (Landing Craft Infantry Large.) They were called crafts rather than ships because initially it was planned to carry them on larger ships

to the theater of operation but they proved to be somewhat seaworthy so the Navy allowed them to cross the ocean on their own. An LCI was 158 feet long and 23 feet 3 inches wide in the middle. They were powered by two sets of quad GM 6-cylinder diesel engines – 3,600 HP per quad – 8 engines total. Each quad turned a screw, one clockwise and one counter-clockwise. At Solomon's I learned that I would be assigned to the crew of LCI(L)961 and it was there that I met my fellow shipmates. The crew of an LCI consisted of 25 enlisted men and 4 officers. None of the men of the 961 had ever been to sea except for one, a MoMM (Motor Machinist Mate.) Our Captain was Lt/JG Gains who seemed a bit dismayed that I was only 17 and had so little training in navigation since I was the lone Quartermaster in the crew. The three other officers were young Ensigns.

After several months of training on LCI's in Chesapeake Bay, we were shipped to Orange, TX to pick up our ship. Several members of the crew and I visited the shipyard and asked to see our ship. We were shown a length of steel (the keel) lying on the ground. It seemed like just a matter of weeks before a gang of women welders had completely assembled the ship. The shipyard sailed her down to Galveston where a rail car of stores and supplies awaited us. After everything was stowed aboard, we had a perfunctory commissioning ceremony on April 12, 1944. We took a shakedown cruise out in the Gulf in somewhat rough seas with a seasoned Navy Commander aboard as an observer. What was memorable about the cruise was the Commander's assistant, a new Academy graduate spic and span in dress whites who immediately became violently seasick. The

Commander asked me to get a bucket of seawater which he proceeded to pour over the poor Ensign as he lay on the deck in his vomit, looking more dead than alive.

On our own, we took a short training cruise to Corpus Christi, TX and then with a small group of LCI's, we set sail for the Panama Canal across the always-rough Gulf of Mexico. At the Canal, one seaman was removed on a stretcher because of chronic sea sickness. Most of the crew went ashore to visit the many bars and red-light district. Since I didn't drink and was very innocent in the ways of the world, I was left to explore Panama City on my own. Strolling down one street, I suddenly and quite innocently found myself in the red-light district, which consisted of a long row of cubicles on each side of the street. All the cubicles were identical, with an open door, brass bed and a chair beside the door upon which the painted ladies sat and hawked their wares. At seventeen, having lived a very sheltered life, I was appalled at the comments and suggestions directed at me. Embarrassed and red-faced, I beat a hasty retreat with my virtue intact. It was during my wanderings that I came across the ship's cook sitting on the curb, very drunk, and clutching a screeching parrot that he bought from a street vendor. I managed to get the cook back to the ship but I don't recall what happened to the parrot.

While in the Canal Zone we received several large portfolios of navigational charts and I spent several days bringing them up to date using the latest information regarding buoy and beacon location and lights. At this point, I should recount what my duties as a Quartermaster entailed. In addition to maintaining the charts, I recorded all the

events and activities that took place aboard ship in the Quartermaster's Log. I then transferred that information to the rough deck log. I was responsible for all the clocks aboard the ship as well as the chronometer. Every several days I listened to the time ticks from the Naval Observatory and recorded the deviation in the chronometer log. I also had to record weather conditions such as cloud cover and type, temperature and relative humidity. In addition, I was in charge of the signal gang. Since we had only two signalmen in the crew, I had to stand signal watch while underway – four hours on and eight off. Each evening I calculated the approximate location of the major stars and assisted the Captain in taking star sights. It was quite a responsibility for a seventeen-year-old kid and I grew up in a hurry, as did everyone else during the war.

After a short stay in the Canal Zone, we received our orders to sail to Port Moresby, New Guinea with a stopover at Bora Bora in the Tahitian Islands. The trip was mostly uneventful except for the time I was on the midnight watch and reported a submarine immediately off our starboard side. It turned out to be a sleeping whale on the surface and I took a little ribbing on that. Each day we reported what we determined to be our position in latitude and longitude to the flagship by flag signal. These positions varied quite significantly from ship to ship. Nonetheless the flagship averaged them and that became the flotilla position for that day. We sailed into Bora Bora without having to make a single course correction. I was always a firm believer in the law of averages after that.

Bora Bora is said to be the most beautiful island in the world and it was a welcome relief to go ashore and take in the magnificent

scenery. The natives were friendly and almost childlike in manner. Some of them worked at the small naval station but did not want to be paid in money because it had no meaning to them. So the Navy gave them catalogs and told them to order what they wanted. The women wanted shoes but since they had gone barefoot all their lives it was impossible to find shoes large enough to fit them. The Navy solved that problem by getting some G.I. issue boots and painting them in various bright colors. It was amusing to watch the ladies on Sunday morning raising a cloud of dust as they trudged to church. It was difficult to leave such an idyllic spot but after refueling we set sail for Port Moresby, New Guinea I believe it was during this leg of the journey that I lost my eighteenth birthday. Traveling west across the International Date Line you lose a day. It was June 12th when I sacked in and June 14th when I woke up and since my birthday is June 13th, I guess I never turned 18. We spent several weeks at Milne Bay (Port Moresby) either beached or at anchor and took on stores and supplies. Returning from one of the trips to the supply depot we had a mishap when our overloaded little dinghy capsized in the heavy seas leaving three of us in the water. Being quite a ways from shore, things got a little desperate, especially when I learned the ship's cook didn't know how to swim. Fortunately, someone on shore spotted our predicament and a launch, complete with chaplain, came out to pick us up.

From Milne Bay, we sailed up the coast to Lae, New Guinea that had just been taken by the Army. In fact, since we arrived by night, we were treated to quite a display with tracers lighting up the sky. We tied up to a little dock and the next morning saw that the Japanese

had hastily dumped all kinds of supplies in the water. We dove down and brought up some discarded artillery shells. Motor Machinist Mate "Bull" Martin suggested that we could make some neat things out of the shells. He removed one of the projectiles from its shell casing and proceeded to unscrew the detonator. Claiming to know all about Japanese ammunitions, he declared that this was a tracer round, and all we had to do was to burn out the charge with some of the powder from shell casing. He sat on the fantail of the ship and proceeded to do just that. I was unsure but curious and stood behind him watching. Our ship's Electrician's Mate was more unsure and took refuge behind the dingy. Initially, it looked like a Roman candle but suddenly exploded sending shrapnel everywhere. Martin took the blunt of it with numerous superficial wounds in the chest area. I took a piece in the calf of my leg and the Electrician got some in his leg. The Pharmacist's Mate bandaged us up and rowed three very sheepish sailors to a nearby LST with a doctor on board. Of course, everyone on the LST lined the rails to get a look at the idiots that tried to blow themselves up. It ceased to be a laughing matter as the doctor probed the wounds looking for Japanese scrap metal. We recovered quickly, wounded more in pride than body. It was around this time frame that I had trouble sleeping because of a loud banging noise coming from a locker next to my bunk. I told the seaman who had been assigned the locker to open it up so I could see what was making the noise. It turned out to be a live mortar round he found lying on the ground and thought it would be a nice "souvenir." I carried it out to the fantail and gently lowered into the ocean. I always felt the Japanese had it all wrong. Instead of

shooting their munitions at us, they would have done more harm by leaving it around so the crazy Americans could fiddle with it and blow themselves up!

Our next stop was Hollandia, New Guinea. I remember going to a USO show there expecting to see some pretty girls but the show consisted of readings from Shakespearean plays. There would have been a mass exodus but the MPs and SPs blocked all the exits to keep us from leaving. I remember the Army brass cruising the dirt roads with good looking nurses. I remember the hilltop mansion where McArthur stayed with his family while the field hospital was down in the jungle with the wounded GIs laying on the ground. I remember the Red Cross charging us for coffee and donuts but denying that after the war.

We participated in an amphibious invasion of Wewak on the Northwest tip of New Guinea. The only casualty was the President of the Philippines who suffered a fatal heart attack when he learned that we were getting that much closer to retaking the Philippines. We visited several of the Solomon Islands on various missions, including Bougainville, where all we had was a beachhead with the Japanese occupying the rest of the island cut off from any possible resupply. I remember body surfing there and wondering what the starving Japanese soldiers were thinking as they watched us from the hills. We beached on one of the Solomon Islands where I volunteered to take a report to the flagship some distance down the beach. It was getting dark and walking through the sand was difficult so when I saw a path in the jungle that seemed to go in the right direction, I took it. Hurrying along, I failed to see a group of very fierce looking natives crouched around a

little campfire. In fact, I failed to see their spears which they had stacked in pyramid fashion and knocked them down with creating quite a racket and startling the warriors. I gave what I thought was a friendly wave and continued down the path half expecting to feel a sharp pain between my shoulder blades.

It was around this time that we were sailing in a convoy and I had the midnight shift in the conning tower. Normally, a seaman in the wheelhouse below would steer the ship on the designated course. The LCI is not steered by a wheel most people associate with ships but rather with a rotor not unlike a streetcar. You push the rotor to the right and you go to starboard and to the left you go to port. The ship could also be steered from the conning tower where we had two buttons, one to go left and one to go right. For some reason, I relieved the helmsman and was steering the ship from above. As I said, it was the midnight watch, the seas were calm and I managed to fall asleep with my finger on the port button. The ship made a wide circle through the entire convoy and miraculously, managed to avoid hitting or getting hit by another ship. I came to with a start and quickly realized what happened. I glanced around and saw that everyone else was fast asleep. I did the only thing possible and yelled that the steering was out. The special sea detail alarm was sounded and people roused out of their bunks. After a minute or two, I said wait, the steering just came back! After we made the necessary corrections to get back to our position in the convoy, the Officer of the Deck asked me if the steering had really gone out. I said, surely you weren't asleep and saw what happened!

Our next mission was to French New Caledonia where in a remote location we

secretly trained an Army Regiment in amphibious operations for the upcoming invasion of the Philippines. Apparently, it wasn't too much of a secret because Tokyo Rose knew about it and informed the GIs that the Royal Japanese Marines were waiting for them.

Everyone listened to Tokyo Rose on the radio because she broadcast the best music and had a very friendly sweet voice as she told us how our girlfriends and wives were cheating on us. We spent a few days in Noumea, the capital of New Caledonia. I remember seeing the famous house of ill repute with soldiers and sailors of every nationality waiting in a long line. I remember the leper colony on an island in the harbor with a high fence to keep the poor souls from escaping. I remember telling a beautiful well-dressed girl that I loved her very much in the only French I learned. She laughed and went on her way having heard that line before. I later learned that she was the French governor's daughter.

We did make it make it to Leyte Gulf in the Philippines but after the big naval battle there. We watched as a C-46 made a crash landing in the Gulf not too far from us. I tried to get the Captain to go to the aid of the crew but he refused because he didn't know if the waters were safe. Finally, a destroyer raced across the Gulf and rescued the plane's crew. Our Captain was noted for not taking any chances. We beached in a fleet recreational area where sailors could drink their beer ration on shore. The area was fenced in and became crowded when the tide was up but on the other side you could watch the officers relaxing in their officer's club in the company of young Filipino girls while being served drinks by stewards in white coats. It was interesting to watch the launches bringing ashore sailors

from the large ships. Fights would break out before the launches hit the beach as grudges were worked out. Fights aboard ship in the Navy were met with severe discipline so all disagreements had to be settled ashore



USS LCI(L) 961 unloading troops at Cape Sansapor, late July—early August 1944.

US Navy Photo 127-9

While in Leyte, we took aboard six trained firefighters, portable pumps and a good deal of foam-making chemicals. We were designated as one of two firefighting and rescue vessels for an upcoming mission. Once underway, we opened our sealed orders and learned that we were part of a pre-invasion fleet that would prepare the way for an amphibious landing in Brunei Bay, Borneo. Brunei is a big oil-producing region which incidentally, made the Sultan of Brunei the richest man in the world. The intelligence people felt the Japanese would open the valves on the oil storage tanks and set the whole bay on fire destroying any invasion fleet. We were expected to blanket the waters with foam in that eventuality. Our trip to Borneo was smooth sailing on calm seas. I should point out that the Pacific is generally very calm compared to the always-rough Atlantic and I suppose that accounts for its name. One LCI broke down in the South

China Sea and we were ordered to stay behind and lend assistance if needed. I was dozing in my customary signalman's chair when a P-38 roared down out of the sun at yardarm level. I could clearly see the pilot grinning knowing that he had scared the daylight out of me. He was sent out to protect us and stayed until we got underway and rejoined the convoy.

As we approached Borneo we came across a number of large canoes leaving the island. The occupants were stripped to the waist and looked like natives. Our course took us very close to one of the canoes and I yelled down "Hey Joe" which was the customary greeting between GI's and natives. They continued paddling and kept their heads down. As they passed, one of them looked back under his arm and I could see he was Japanese and so informed the Captain. Other ships also noticed the same thing and notified the flagship. The Flag sent a couple of small gunboats back to investigate. They reported that the occupants were indeed Japanese soldiers escaping the imminent invasion and asked for instructions. After a long pause, the Flag replied; "act at your discretion."

Since the convoy consisted of small vessels and we were headed into hostile waters, it was obvious that we couldn't take aboard prisoners. The gunboats proceeded to mow down the unfortunate soldiers with machine gun fire. I watched the sorry spectacle with binoculars from the conning tower. As the gunboats pulled away, one of the Japanese climbed back into his canoe and waved his arms taunting the executioners. The gunboat returned and again riddled the canoe with machine gun fire and again this guy got up waving his arms. Finally, someone jumped into the canoe and dispatched the poor soul at close range. Later that day we saw additional

canoes and watched as our land based planes used them as target practice.

Nearing Brunei, we noticed the huge columns of smoke and watched as high and low altitude bombers bombarded the invasion area. The pre-invasion force consisted of minesweepers, specialized LCI's, UDT (Underwater Demolition Teams) and several other ships. The flagship was a Destroyer Escort. We had three days to clear the harbor before the main invasion fleet arrived. There was one other Fire-Fighting and Rescue LCI and we each followed a group of three minesweepers as they crisscrossed the harbor. As the mines were cut loose and popped to the surface, our job was to sink them or blow them up with rifle fire or our 20MM AA guns. I remember how sore my shoulder became firing clip after clip using the old Springfield 30-06.

At this time, I should mention that we made two invasions in Borneo, the other at Balikpapan . We were in the pre-invasion group both times but I'm not sure when and where some of the events I will relate took place. I am sure that on the actual invasion day at Brunei, we entered the harbor in a column and as we made a flanking maneuver, a Japanese two-man submarine which had followed in the wake of our ship fired a torpedo at the largest target he saw, an LSD (Landing Ship-Dock) which was right beside us. The torpedo passed just a few feet in front of us and headed for the LSD. Since the LSD was so close, I felt sure we would be affected, so I crouched down and braced myself for the explosion.

As luck would have it, the torpedo hit at an angle and bounced off. A few minutes later the sub fired his only other torpedo toward the mass of ships maneuvering to get into

position. That torpedo went clear across the harbor without hitting a single ship. At that point, the sub surfaced and one of the crew opened his hatch and looked around perhaps wondering why he hadn't been able to inflict any damage. The flagship advised all ships to ignore the sub knowing he had shot his wad and any attempts to sink it could result in chaos in the crowded harbor. I later saw the sub beached near the entrance to the harbor.

My battle station in the conning tower afforded me the opportunity to view the entire action close up with my binoculars. Those of the crew below deck could only wonder what was going on up above. There was a flip side to being topside. On one occasion, as I was watching the action on shore, a heavy cruiser slipped in behind us and let go a broadside directed at the landing zone. The shockwave and noise was unimaginable. I was totally deaf for several hours.

On the first day of one of the pre-invasion forays in Japanese waters, we entered at battle stations and were met with complete silence. As we wondered where the enemy was, music suddenly blared from our loudspeaker system. The cook had put a record on that was popular at the time "Come out, Come out, wherever you are." It certainly relieved the tension. He followed that with some Japanese records we acquired along the way. None of the enemy showed up.

Disaster struck on one occasion as we were leaving the harbor for the evening. A large fleet minesweeper, the USS Salute I believe, struck a mine. We, and the other FF & Rescue LCI were ordered to take off the crew and try to save the ship. The mine they hit had a delay fuse and went off directly beneath amidships, breaking the keel and killing ten of the crew and injured a number of the others.

After tying up and getting the pumps working we went aboard the stricken ship to find a missing crew member. He was found under a mess table in knee-deep water. He had been writing a letter home when he was killed by the concussion. There is something eerie about going aboard a ship lying dead in the water. Normally, a ship pulsates with all kinds of sounds - voices, the propulsion plant, generators and the like. On this stricken ship, all you could hear was the water sloshing back and forth. It was a long and tiring day and I went below and collapsed in my bunk. I was awakened during the night to find our ship listing considerably. Our pumps could not keep the minesweeper afloat and it was pulling us down. I went on deck to find some of our crew trying to undo the hawsers that lashed us to the sinking ship. The hawsers were stretched so tight that undoing them was impossible. I jumped on the minesweeper with a fire axe and began chopping the lines. The Captain of the Salute, who suffered a broken arm when the mine exploded, boarded the ship as well so he could be the last to leave his sinking ship as dictated by naval tradition.

As soon as the ships were free of each other, I was dismayed to see our ship pulling away. I immediately had visions of being left on a sinking ship in the middle of the night, in hostile waters, with a wounded officer. As the aft of our ship passed I leaped over and grabbed a stanchion and pulled myself aboard. I went to the conning tower and indignantly informed the Captain that he was in too much of a hurry to leave and had left the two of us behind. He assured me that he planned to circle around and come back. Knowing his timidity in similar situations, I had my doubts. Yes, we did go back and

picked up the wounded Captain.

The next morning, we returned to the scene and indeed the USS Salute had sunk with just the radar dome above water. The crew of the minesweeper let out a cheer knowing that they would be heading for home on a thirty-day survivor leave.

After one of the invasions in Borneo, we were ordered to take a small force of New Zealanders up a river to retake a small town. The New Zealanders, who were also known as Kiwis, impressed me. They were big, friendly, and jungle-wise. No two had the same uniform or gear but they looked like they could handle themselves in any situation. We arrived at the town, which was deserted, and disembarked the small force. Since we were to be tied up for a while, two of my mates and I decided we would take a little walkabout. We soon found ourselves in on the outskirts of town in a field when a camouflaged Kiwi pulled us down to the ground and whispered that we were in "no man's land" and to get back to our ship.

On the return, we came across a dwelling separated from the rest of the village. As we approached we could hear pitiful moaning coming from the structure. We opened the door and were met with a terrible stench. The place was filled with dead and dying villagers. I was overcome by the sight and smell and went outside to recover. As I did, I tripped over a corpse covered with maggots and flies. The flies swarmed over me and, of course, aggravated my already nauseated condition. We returned to the village and informed the medics of the situation and they soon carried the living back to town on stretchers.

Back at the ship several Kiwis, prodding a

very young and frightened Japanese soldier in front of them, approached me. He couldn't have been more than fifteen years old. They had orders not to take any prisoners, as there was no way to secure and feed them. They asked me if we could use someone to wash dishes and do menial tasks on board ship, I thought it was a great idea and went to the Captain with the proposal. He said I was crazy and there was no way he would take a Japanese soldier on board. I relayed the news to the Kiwis and they shrugged and dragged the boy off into the brush. I soon heard a shot and know that the war was over for the poor young soldier.

The horrors of war were not just visited on the Japanese. In one Borneo operation, a prisoner of war camp was liberated. It was filled with Hindus and Sheiks of the British Colonial Army. None of them could walk and had to be carried on stretchers aboard the LST that transported them out from the shore. I doubt if any of them weighed more than eighty or ninety pounds. Although imprisoned as long as three or four years, they did not forget their military training. As weak as they were, they managed to sit up and salute the flag as they were brought aboard the ship.

The operations in Borneo took place toward the end of the war. By that time the admirals and generals had learned how to conduct amphibious landings without a large loss of life. In fact, the landings in Borneo made for quite a spectacular show. The landing zones were bombed for days before the invasion. On the day of the landings, low-flying planes strafed and bombed targets of opportunity. The actual landings were confined to a stretch of beach several hundred yards wide and were preceded by waves of

LCI mortar ships, LCI rocket ships and LCI gunboats. As each wave approached the shore they would fire as fast as they could reload before peeling off for the next wave. The rocket ships were particularly impressive with hundreds of rockets in the air at any one time. In fact, you could not distinguish individual explosions, it was just one continuous explosion.

Our job as FF & Rescue was to position our ships several hundred off shore to mark off the landing zone. As soon as the last wave of gunboats peeled off, the small landing craft carrying the troops hit the beach. Despite the intense bombardment, I could still see the bunkers and pillboxes relatively untouched. However, any survivors were certainly shell shocked to the point of helplessness.

It was during one of these bombardments that we received a frantic call from one of the mortar ships; "Horn Toad (our call sign) we are on fire!" I looked up to see the caller race out of the wheelhouse and he never stopped until he was in the water swimming. Other sailors were diving into water and the dinghy, loaded to capacity, was being rowed away in double quick time. It looked like a Keystone Kops movie! We pulled alongside with pumps going and quickly extinguished the small fire. I can't blame the crew about being scared. The propellant for the mortars is in gelatin-like sheets and is highly flammable. With the deck stacked with mortar rounds ready to be fired, it could have been a real disaster.

I previously mentioned how calm the Pacific Ocean was. That was not always the case. During the typhoon season, we encountered extremely rough seas on occasion. I recall being in a convoy sailing into very heavy swells. The bow of the ship would be completely submerged while the stern was out

of the water with props screaming. As buoyancy took over the bow would shoot straight up and then come crashing down again. Since the LCI had a flat bottom, it made quite a splash as it hit the water. You could see the cables on the stanchions along the side of the ship go slack and then stretch taut as the ship flexed in the middle.

It was times like this that you prayed that the woman welders back at the shipyard knew what they were doing. Some of us brave and foolish souls would carefully make our way to the bow of the ship, hold on to the cables, and ride the ship like a bucking bronco. I know it's hard to believe, but I saw some of our sister LCI's skip completely out of the water with nothing but daylight beneath them from bow to stern.

The operations in Borneo were a joint effort by the U.S. Navy and soldiers of the British Commonwealth. During one of the landings, I witnessed a shocking incident. As soon as the beachhead was secured, the villagers were assembled in a long line. Several soldiers escorting an individual, wearing a bag over his head to conceal his identity, went down the line. The informer would point out certain people who had collaborated with the Japanese. These people were pulled out of the line and immediately beheaded by a turbaned Hindu wielding a large saber. I assume this was to serve as a cruel and dramatic object lesson for these simple natives - you better pick the right side to be on.

It was shortly after Borneo, that most of the enlisted men on board decided to shave our heads. I should point out that being on a small ship had its advantages in that we were not bound by naval protocol. We wore whatever clothing we pleased or no clothing at all. Many times, I stood on the platform above the conning tower signaling another ship wearing nothing but my skivvies. Incidentally, most communication between

ships was done by blinker light, semaphore, or flag hoist. To this day, well over fifty years later, I can still send a semaphore or blinker message. Anyway, the very next day after we shaved our heads, we got orders to return to the States for refitting into a gunboat. At this point the war in Europe was over and the talk was about the invasion of Japan. We slowly made our way back to the states at our customary 12 knots.

We stopped to refuel at Ulithi, an atoll used as a naval base. The harbor was teeming with ships of all sizes. As we were weaving in and around the ships, I was suddenly aware that a heavy cruiser was trying to raise us. At least twenty signalmen, using semaphore and blinker light were signaling us. I gave them a K (go ahead) and, received a message that we had violated the rules of the road and common courtesy by cutting in front of a superior vessel and requested the name, rank and serial number of the commanding officer. Our Captain turned pale and asked me to send his sincere apologies hoping that would appease them. All twenty signalmen, in unison, replied - name, rank, and serial number of the commanding officer!! I told the Captain, what can they do to you? - throw you in a brig out here in the Pacific? Reluctantly, he had me send the requested information.

We did later have a pleasant stopover at Pearl Harbor. It was there that we had our first taste of cold milk in about two years. Two days out of Long Beach, California, we got word of the atomic bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the subsequent surrender of Japan. We heard of the wild celebrations taking place throughout the country. When we finally pulled into port, there was no brass bands, people waving or pretty girls waiting to embrace us. The whole country was suffering from a giant hangover! Instead of a hero's welcome, a grumpy old chief told us where to tie up and to get off the ship so they

could fumigate it.

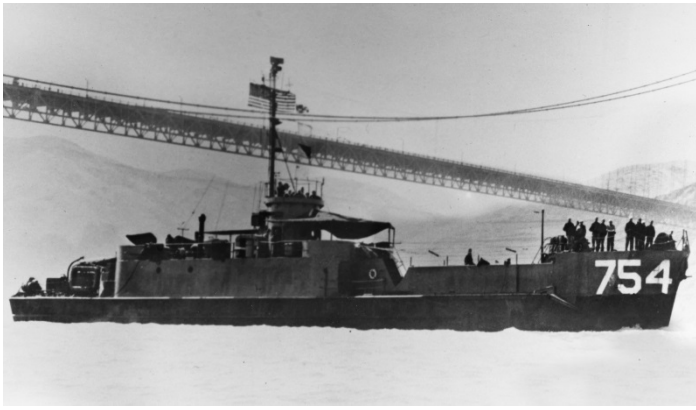
That is my recollections of the events that took during my service in the Navy. I later made the mistake of joining an Army Reserve unit while attending college and ended up serving in the Army for about two years during the Korean Conflict. However, it was the time in the Navy that I recall most vividly. The Navy took a teenager and made a man out of him in a hurry.

Please excuse the rambling account of events that took place so many years ago and please forgive me for the poor grammar and any inaccuracies that may have found their way into my tale.

Alfred H. Philipp October 17, 2002

Note: The 2002 date above is when Mr. Philipp completed the account of his WW II service. He sent the information to me recently. His attention to detail provides a number of facts on day-to-day life aboard an LCI in the Campaign in the Pacific. His description of the duties of a Quartermaster, for example, is new information for many who did not serve in the Navy. Through his report we are able to follow this young man from his enlistment to his discharge at the end of the War. I hope you find this story as interesting and informative as I did. Joe Flynn, Editor





NAVY DEPARTMENT - HOLD FOR RELEASE

UNTIL 9:00 A.M. (E.W.T.) August 16, 1945

LANDING CRAFT MORTAR SHIPS BLAST PATHS ON FOUR INVASIONS

ABOARD LCI(M) 754 IN THE PACIFIC—

This sea going mortar battery, flanked by her sister ships of Group 17 steamed 25,000 miles to blast a path ahead of the first assault waves in four major landing operations within a space of six months.

LCI(M) (Landing Craft Infantry, Mortar) Group 17 lays unofficial claim to being the only small ship unit to participate in all four successive invasions of Leyte, October 20, 1944, Lingayen Gulf, January 9, 1945, Iwo Jima, February 19, 1945, and Okinawa, April 1, 1945.

Group 17 formed up in 1944 with a force of 12 mortar ships, but operational demands scattered several of the group to other operational theaters. LCI(M) 658, 659, 660, 754, remained with Group 17 throughout. USS LCI(M) 1056 nominally attached to another unit, operated with them in the four landings.

These ships were converted from troop-carrying LCI's with the personnel berthing spaces converted to ammunition magazines. Given formidable fire power by installation of mortars, the ships were used for close-in

beach bombardment before troop landing and subsequently for special firing missions along the beach.

These 157-foot mortar ships had a deck load of problems in bringing their weapons unfailingly to the firing line on D-Day to blast enemy-held beaches, knocking out Jap guns, ammunition dumps, and troops. This is the story of LCI(M) 754 and is typical of what happened to the other ships.

When in October 1944 the "754" put to sea with a task force bound for Leyte, only the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant(j.g.) Lloyd West, U.S.N.R of 905 Dayton Road, Chico, California and one radioman had been through a landing operation.

Moreover, the ship was crippled before it started for the objective. On the eve of departure from the final staging area the ship was rammed by another vessel, wiping out the port deck house and opening seams at the waterline.

A repair crew was welding reinforcing when the task group got underway at dawn. Officers and men were determined to carry out their assignment, however, the ship sailed with bulkheads braced by wooden shores and weeping seams filled with mattress and blankets. This jury rig held during the long cruise to the Leyte beachhead, stood firm during the shock of firing during the bombardment and the return to base.

The Lingayen Gulf landing went smoothly until the "754" lost the starboard propeller, necessitating a slow 900-mile cruise on the one propeller back to Leyte and a drydock.

Delayed by the drydocking the LCI(M) did not reach the staging area for the Iwo Jima operation until hours before the wailing time. The ship had engine trouble, but the black

gang turned to with the spare parts available and the "754" sailed for Iwo on time.

However, one day out of Iwo Jima, her engines were disabled and the "754" was taken in tow. Again, the resourceful motor machinist's mates worked through the night and the ship carried out her assigned firing mission under her own power.

Three weeks after returning to base from Iwo, Group 17 sailed for Okinawa, took part in the assault landings and for 75 days carried out patrol and firing missions around the island.

LCI(M) 754 was built by Commercial Iron Works, Portland Oregon, and was completed in May, 1944.

LCI(M) 658 was built by George Lawley and Sons Corporation, Naponset, Massachusetts and completed in March 1944. The Commanding Officer is Lieutenant (j.g.) Dale Ward U.S.N. of 320 South Broadway, Aurora, Illinois.

LCI(M) 659 was built by George Lawley and Sons Corporation, Naponset, Massachusetts and completed in March 1944. Commanding Officer is Lieutenant (j.g.) T. A. Cook, U.S.N.R. of 421 Court Street, Reno, Nevada.

LCI(M) 660 was built by George Lawley and Sons Corporation, Naponset, Massachusetts and completed in March 1944. Commanding Officer is Lieutenant Philip P. Marvin, U.S.N.R., of 161 Brito Avenue, Scarsdale, New York.

LCI(M) 1056 was built by Defoe Shipbuilding Company, Bay City, Michigan, and was completed in April 1944. Commanding Officer is Ensign Clifton L. Edman, of 1127 Yosemite Avenue, Turlock, California.

You have to fish for LCI Stories

In March, I called Dr. Charlie Crandall, LCI(G) 471 to give him a heads up on a March Elsie Item article written by the son of Crandall's shipmate, a Robert D. DeViney. The article recounted the action at Iwo Jima on Feb. 17, 1945.

Dr. Crandall said he remembered that action, and said they "put up a good fight. - the decks were covered with blood and shrapnel." As they started to clean up, he asked some of the crewmen to gather shrapnel in a five-gallon bucket. Then he commandeered a small boat and headed over to the Admiral, with the bucket. He was ushered onboard and taken to the Admiral at a conference table with other officers. Asked what he had, Crandall said it was the shrapnel gathered off the bloody deck of the 471 after the fight. The Admiral said, "Dump it on the table." Crandall said, "It's all bloody, Sir." The Admiral said, "Dump it on the table." And he did, and he left.

Later back at the 471, he was told an Officer had arrived and wanted to talk to him. It was Commander "Mad Mike" Malanaphy who asked, "Are you Lt. Crandall?" "Yes sir." "Well, we are making you the Captain of the Flagship 457 and Group Commander." Crandall, said, "I can't do that, Sir, I'm an Engineering Officer." Malanaphy said, "Not anymore." When I told Dr. Crandall I was taking notes, he said, "I just wanted to tell you about it, I wasn't looking for a story." I said, "Well I am always looking for stories and that's a good one." I intended to follow up with Dr. Crandall to pin down the details." But then, Dr. Crandall sailed home before I could talk with him again. He was in honored in our Portland Memorial Service. *Editor*

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Please feel free to contact any of the officers or directors listed below for whatever comments, questions or assistance you may need. We're here to serve you!

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Attention LCI Veterans and Associates

We need your stories now. Write or email Joe Flynn (See Contact Information Above).

USS LCI National Association Portland Reunion – May 2017



Front row: from left: Phil Reed, LCI 35; Jack Walters, LCI 668; John Cox LCI 551; Harold McCreary, LCI 412; Robert Wright, LCI 1059; LeRoy Olson, LCI 966; Dave McKay, LCI 30,639; Earl Carlin, LCI 472; Ray Olley, LSM 311; Marlene Yandel, widow of Burton Yandel, LCI 64; Susan Menhorn, widow of George Menhorn, LCI 438;

Back row: Leo Kelly, LSM 409 (Vietnam veteran), Dr. John Stanley, LCI 958; Gordon Smith, LCI 43; Delbert Hollinger, LCI 470; Abe Laurenzo, LCI 409; Chris Shelvik, LCI 337; Robert Bansky, LCI 594; Vern Malmquist, LCI 948.

At reunion but not shown: Andrew Pomeroy, LCI 981; and Bill Hoyt, LCI 741