



Elsie Item

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

• Established May 14-18, 1991, Norfolk, VA •

ISSUE 114

SEPTEMBER 2021



LCI(L)1097 was launched at Defoe Shipbuilding, and then participated in a War Bond Campaign at Navy Pier in Chicago on D-Day, 6 June 1944, along with LST(H) 652.

Inside this issue...

- Memories of Joseph Gage on LCI(L) 1074
- LCIs honored at military services
- Early southwest Pacific campaigns



Navy and Coast Guard Veterans of World War II and Korea USS LANDING CRAFT INFANTRY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

MISSION

The USS LCI National Association is dedicated to preserving the history of the World War II Landing Craft Infantry ships and honoring the sailors that manned them. In our publications and website you will find first-hand accounts from the sailors, stories about the battles they fought, the experiences they had, and historical photos.

usslci.org



To learn more about **your** LCI history, **your** collective experiences during the war, and other related LCI information, please visit **your** website. Here you will find all the information related to LCIs that we have acquired. **Enjoy your visit!!**

ABOUT US

- What We Do
- Officers & Executive Board
- AFMM-LCI-713 Alliance
- Non-Profit Status

THE STORIES

- Featured Stories
- Story Archive
- Share Your Story

THE ELSIE ITEM

- Recent Articles Available Online*
- The Archive
- Other Research Resources

THE LCI EXPERIENCE

- LCI Facts
- Combat Awards
- Honor, Valor, Sacrifice
- Reunions
- The LCI-713

* Note: The most recent articles and updates to the site will appear shortly after the publication of each Elsie Item Issue

Your Story



We are always looking for stories and memories of your LCI service. Although we are primarily interested in your experiences aboard an LCI ship, we are also interested in the circumstances leading up to your entry into the Navy and the impact that your WWII experiences have had on your postwar life.

General guidance on sharing your story can be downloaded from the Association website: usslci.org/share-your-story/. Any letter to the editor can be sent to **Jeff Veesenmeyer** (JeffreyMktg@gmail.com) or the postal address below.

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"Elsie Item": 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, to any past or current member of the U.S. Armed Forces, and to anyone interested in the history of LCIs.

Notice: The USS LCI National Association is not responsible for the accuracy of articles submitted for publication. Time and resources do not permit the ability to check each story; therefore, we rely on the author to research each article.

Observations from Officer's Country

by Robert E. Wright, Jr.

USS LCI Association Annual Reunion 2021, the continuing saga...**Canceled**

- 1) Only 4 members responded that they were willing to go to New Orleans this year.
- 2) Due to the continuing current pandemic in that city we had had few options for a safe event. This was especially true for the 90 year old veterans

The LCI Association is still financially strong.

The page that follows this announcement reports the Financial position of the USS LCI National Association as of the fiscal year end on May 31, 2021.

I received a phone call one day a year ago from the son of one of the LCI members. He informed me that his dad had passed the previous evening. He went on to relate that his dad had never talked much about his time in service, or the events that he experienced during the war. He said that he knew nothing about the LCI's. But he now realized that it must have been important to his dad, because a copy of the latest *Elsie Item* was the only item on the table at his bedside.

This conversation established a goal to try to make each issue of the *Elsie Item* a worthwhile tribute and a connection to memories of old crewmates for all those who served aboard these ships during the war years

What does that have to do with Finances? The answer is that because of the pandemic we increased the number of printed pages in the *Elsie Item* from 28 to 32 or 36 for each issue. The printing company we used previously sold out to another printer who charges more. The price of mailing increased because it weighed more, and postage rates increased too. It now costs approximately \$15.00 to have each issue of the *Elsie Item* arrive in your mailbox. We send four issues each year. That totals \$60.00 per member each year. We have maintained the annual dues at \$30.00 per year because there are some members who find even that amount is hard to justify with their incomes.

The Association has been able to continue do this for the entire time that I have been an officer of this organization because of the continuing generous donations of the members of this association. One widow mailed a one dollar bill and apologized that was all she could afford that year. Some members donate \$5 others send \$100's. Without all this incredible support, there would be no Association. Anything I did would matter little.

I find that **Thank You** barely conveys my gratitude to all of you.

Financial Report of the USS LCI National Association Inc.

We are presenting the results of the USS LCI National Association, Inc., Financial Operations for the years ending May 30, 2021, and 2020. For these 2 years, the expenses of the LCI Association to publish the Elsie Item newsletter, maintain the USSLCI.Org website and the the expenses for administration have remained relatively constant averaging \$1,097 per month during the current year and \$1,111 per month in the prior year. Our main expense is the cost for the ELSIE ITEM which, last year, included additional pages and more coverage of the history the LCI's in WWII.

As expected, there has been a natural decline in the number of WWII veteran members and their related family members which has not been offset by new memberships. This has led to a direct decrease in receipts of dues. Fortunately, continued generous Cash Donations by our members has allowed the LCI Association to maintain financial viability over these last 3 years. Thank you to all for your Generous Support!

Robert E. Wright Jr., Treasurer

USS LCI National Association Inc. Statement of Financial Position

	Current Year End May 31, 2021	Prior Year End May 31, 2020
ASSETS		
Cash and Checking	29,264	28,338
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>29,264</u>	<u>28,338</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Total Liabilities	0	10
Equity		
Opening Equity Balance 06/01/2006	90,564	90,564
Reduction of Net Assets 2007 to 2016	-81,686	-81,686
Post 2016 Addition to Net Assets	19,450	19,450
Total Equity	<u>29,264</u>	<u>28,328</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>29,264</u>	<u>28,338</u>

USS LCI National Association Inc Statement of Activities

	Jun 1 2020 - May 31 2021	Jun 1 2019 - May 31 2020
Support, Gains and Revenue		
Direct Public Support (Donations)	8,429	5,375
Membership Dues	5,490	5,750
Net Product Revenue	180	422
Total Support, Gains and Revenue	<u>14,099</u>	<u>11,547</u>
Expenditures		
Organization Operating Expenditures	183	311
Elsie Publication	12,927	12,863
Website Operations	0	0
Annual Reunion Expenditures	0	163
Total Organization Operating Expenditures	<u>13,163</u>	<u>13,337</u>
Contributions to Other Organizations	0	0
Total Expenditures	<u>13,163</u>	<u>13,337</u>
Total Addition to Net Assets	<u>936</u>	<u>-1,791</u>



Gator Gossip

By Jeff Veessenmeyer

Hello Jeff,

Thank you for the great job you did on our last ELSIE ITEM (Issue 112). It was great. That was a nice picture you took on the bridge of LCI 713 of our four "old navy guys." I have known Gordon Smith since he joined our group. We are so lucky to have Gordon as he has done so much for the association.

As for Royal Wetzel, I was in the same convoy on our way to Lingayen Gulf when they got hit. Del Hollinger and I were almost neighbors at Buckner Bay in Okinawa. We were both blown onto the beach by a very strong typhoon. We were too badly damaged to be repaired. I spent three months on Okinawa living in a tent.

Thank you for all you do for us. Without you, people wouldn't still be members.

Regards, Chris Shelvik SM2/c LCI(R) 337

Hi Jeff,

The ELSIE ITEM (Issue 113) is terrific. Great job Jeff. Wonderful writing and great photographs. You did a wonderful job on my dad's story. I will share the PDF with my family.

Best, John Harvey

Editor's Note: Thanks for the kind words John, but not totally deserved. So sorry I got

your dad's first name wrong on two of the photo captions. He's a Richard not a Robert. My apologies. See more stories about Lt.(jg) Richard G. Harvey's LCI(L) 1074 in this issue.

Hi Jeff,

Thanks for publishing Gary Frogner's photos and text of LCI(R) 1024. It looks great (Issue 113.) He's right, if you visit the coastal cliffs of Hill 89 on the southern tip of Okinawa today, it is remarkably unchanged from June of 1945. Also, the Saipan photos and text from the previous issue (112) looked good too! Good work!

Best, Charlie Ritz

Good afternoon, Jeff

My copy of ELSIE ITEM came in the mail today. It's a wonderful magazine. I was excited to see my article (Chaplain's Corner) in print. I will be sharing this article with my Vancouver Christian Writers group. We have at least one veteran in the class who will enjoy looking through the magazine. Thanks again Jeff for giving me the opportunity to write these articles. I certainly enjoy writing them.

Judi Mayfield

SEND LETTERS & PHOTOS TO:

JeffreyMktg@gmail.com or my mailing address is...

Jeff Veessenmeyer

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Do not fear - *God is in charge*

As I sat at my desk this morning, I asked God to give me the words He wants all of us to hear. The first words that came to me, “*God is in charge.*”

Wow. For the last several days I pondered what to write about. The phrase “Do not fear” kept repeating itself in my mind. I believe the Lord was prompting me to put the two phrases together and go from there.

In Isaiah 41:10 God said, “So do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (NIV)

In these turbulent times, we need to cling to God’s promises. He loves us completely and will not abandon His followers. Today, we see so much evil in our world. Fear is being instilled in so many people.

Our First and Second Amendment rights are being challenged and dissolved right before our eyes. The history of the United States of America is being changed.

It seems as every major and minor part of our lives and our country is being changed and/or destroyed.

When our brave men and women in the military valiantly fought for our country, they knew who the enemy was and had been taught how to destroy them. The enemy today is much different. He is an unseen force that is motivating many of those in power to promote ill-will and hatred among our citizens. Thus, promoting a new kind of fear. A fear we must defeat.

How do we defeat this strange enemy? *God is in charge.* He sees what is happening and it must sadden Him to see His creation being destroyed. But never fear. Our hope is in the Lord. “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by

Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.” Jeremiah 32:17. (NIV)

He tells us in Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (NIV)

It is time for us to fight for our God given freedoms and for this beautiful country we live in. How do we do this? Our greatest “weapon” is the Word of God. Ephesians 6: 10-12 prompts us, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (NIV)

We can help ourselves and others to step out of the fear they have been living in for the past two years by turning to the joy found in the Scriptures.

For example: Psalm 30:11 You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” (NIV). Psalm 96:1 “Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD all the earth!” (NIV) God’s love endures forever.

Judi Mayfield

Author / Writer / Poet
Elsie Item Chaplain



In Memoriam

LCI 351

Guy Herbert Smith

LCI 352/356

Carl Wesley Wilson Jr.

LCI 432

Regis S. McCurry

LCI 448

Leroy Worcester

LCI 455

Walter Larson

LCI 805

Ralph Irving Miller

LCI 966

Leroy Olson

LCI 1088

Edwin Moser



Memories of Joseph Gage

PM2/c on LCI(L) 1074

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

Joe Gage: *“I chose the Navy and to enlist as soon as possible for two reasons: First, I’ve always wanted a warm place to sleep and three-square meals a day. Second, I knew as long as a ship was floating, I would have all that.”*

On February 1, 2016 Joseph Gage was interviewed by the Nimitz Education and Research Center in Fredericksburg, Texas. His story began as an orphan in Michigan. He joined the Navy in 1942, attended boot camp in Maryland, trained to be a medic, was assigned to *LCI(L) 1074*, and cruised to the Pacific War via the Mississippi River.

Joseph Gage’s story begins when he was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1924. He was orphaned and adopted at the age of four. He moved to Philadelphia before the war started. After graduating from high school, he joined the Navy. Gage was sent to Bainbridge, Maryland for his boot camp training.

Joe Gage: *It was a temporary boot camp that was newly constructed. We had new huts, and it was all mud in the construction site.*

About four weeks into boot camp the chief petty officer came in. “He had hash marks down to his ankles,” said Gage. He told the recruits that they needed volunteers to go to New York. Gage thought that would be a great deal. Boot camp was no fun. Marching in the mud. Bad food. Restricted to base. But he remembered someone telling

him to never volunteer. So, he didn’t. He learned later those guys who volunteered were being trained as gunners for the merchant vessels crossing the Atlantic. Over 3,500 merchant ships were sunk during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Joe Gage: *We had guys every morning who would volunteer. I can understand that because after four weeks in boot camp, New York City sounded very exciting.*

After boot camp everyone took a test. Gage was told that based on his score he should be a medic. He’d be going to the Naval Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia. “I knew nothing about medicine. I had no desire to be a medic,” said Gage. His only work experience after high school had been in the Philadelphia Navy Yard as an electrician’s helper. At Norfolk he worked in various wards of the hospital. It was mostly on the job training.

After about eight months he took the test and became a 3rd class Pharmacist Mate. From there he was transferred to the Naval Air Station at Montego Bay, North Carolina. It was an island where the Wright Brothers tested their planes. The Navy used it to practice touch and go carrier landings. Gage worked in a small medical dispensary there. They had one doctor and four corpsmen. The facility was limited. When there was serious accident, the injured were flown over to Norfolk.

After 6-8 months he got notice that he was assigned to a newly commissioned ship and was to go Bay City, Michigan. He thought, “maybe I’ll be on a destroyer, that’d be great.” He got to Bay City at the Defoe Shipbuilding Company and there she was,

LCI(L) 1074. This was the newer version of landing craft infantry ships. It had the round conn and bow door with a ramp.



The LCI(L) 1074 was commissioned on 30 June 1944 at Bay City, Michigan.

Out of a crew of 25 only the Chief Boatswain's Mate had ever been to sea. It was a good thing their shakedown cruise was on Lake Huron and their first voyage was on the Mississippi River to New Orleans. From there they crossed the Gulf of Mexico and passed through the calm waters of the Panama Canal. The blue waters of the Pacific lay ahead.

Gage and the crew wondered where they'd head next. They didn't know if they'd go up the coast of California to San Francisco or head across the Pacific to Pearl Harbor. Either would be exciting and great liberty.

Their skipper, Lt.(jg) Richard G. Harvey, mustered the crew and said, "We're going across and our first stop will be Bora Bora." This was a distance of 5,225 miles. The 1074 had a fuel capacity of 860 barrels of diesel. At 12 knots her range was 4,000 miles.

Joe Gage: *And so, we left and went to Bora Bora, and I think that took 18 days because*

we couldn't run on all eight engines. We didn't have enough fuel, so we used two engines on the port and two on the starboard and then we'd rotate the time on the other four engines. If we had run at 11 or 12 knots we'd have run out of fuel.

Two days out of Panama one of the crew got really sea-sick. Pharmacist Mate Gage explained the condition like this... "Well with sea sickness one of three things happen. Either the individual never gets sick, or you do get sick but only for a day or two, or you get sick all the time." This shipmate was sick all the time and couldn't eat. Anything he ate he threw up. He got weak and dehydrated. Gage gave him as much fluid as possible. He had no IV on the ship. His dispensary amounted to a locker in the mess hall. "I had a good supply of alcohol which made me a very popular guy," said Gage. But there was nothing much he could do for chronic sea sickness. By the time they reached Bora Bora after 18 days at sea the poor guy was so weak, they had to carry him off on a stretcher.

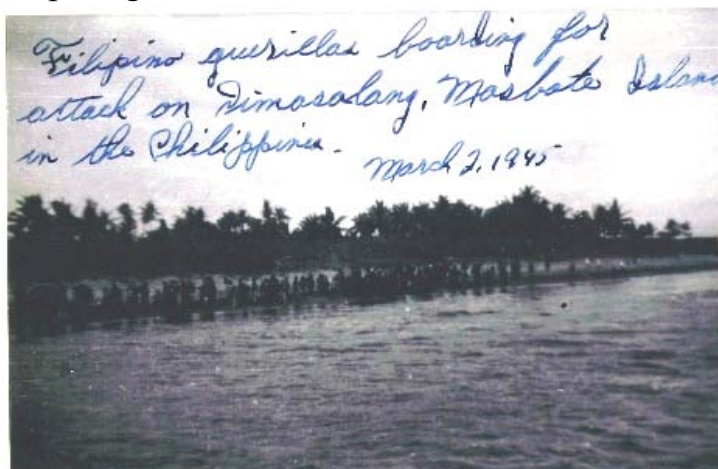
There was nothing in Bora Bora during the war. None of the other crewmembers even went to shore. For two days they took on water, fuel, and supplies. On 6 September 1944 they departed. Many years later when one of Robert Harvey's children would ask how far it was to where they were driving, he always responded, "Not as far as Bora Bora."

Gage recalls living conditions on the 1074 as being pretty good. The ship was designed to carry 200 troops. They had no troops on board while heading to the war zone. With only 25 guys on the ship there was room to spread out. There was no fresh water for

showers or laundry. They didn't have desalinization equipment. Showers were in salt water. Laundry would be tied to a line and tossed over the side for a couple of hours. But men learned to adapt.

Joe Gage: *We had a good cook, although he drove a cement mixer before getting in the Navy. Refrigeration was a little limited on the ship, but he used to bake bread and I'll never forget, we had a lot of weevils that would get into the flour. The crew would say, "What's that?" and he'd say "Oh they are raisins!"*

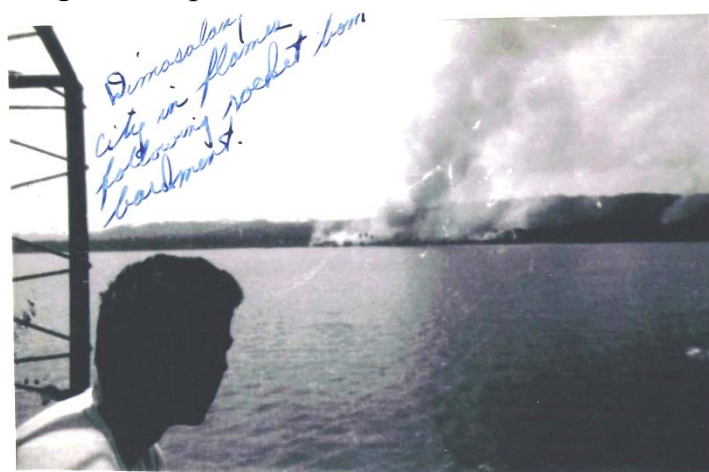
The 1074 arrived in Leyte Bay, the Philippines 21 December 1944. They were detached from their flotilla and assigned to a Filipino guerilla force.



Gage documented events in the Philippines with a cheap Kodak camera. He included dates, details, and places on each photo.

Many of the Japanese garrisons on smaller islands were now cut off from resupply. They would raid villages for food. The 1074 would land a force of about 150 guerillas to attack and wipeout the starving Japanese. They were supported by gunboats and warships if the beach landings were contested. The Filipinos didn't have any medics. Wounded would be flown out on

PBY seaplanes to a base or hospital ship. Gage was only able to provide basic first aid and give morphine.



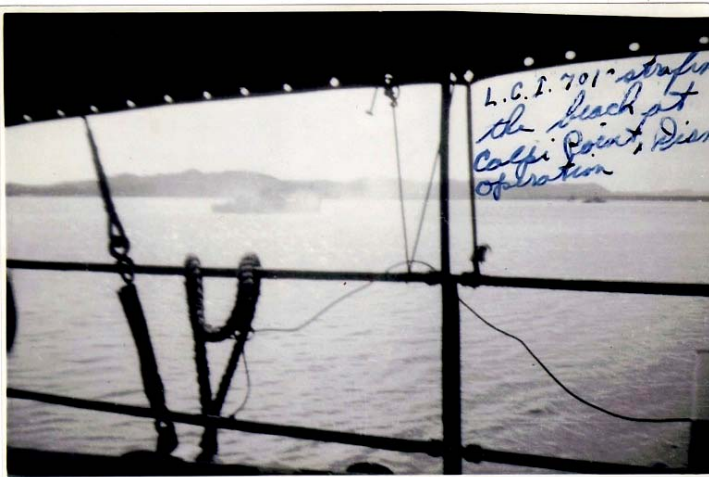
On 3 March 1945 the 1074 participated in the Dimasalang Operation on the island of Masbate. LCI Rocket barrages left the city in flames.



Gage identified crewmember Garrison on the right, photographed during the attack on Dimasalang 3 March 1945.

The 1074 never participated in landing U.S. troops. For the Borneo invasion they loaded up with Australian troops in the Philippines. Their flotilla landed troops at Brunei Bay on the morning of 10 June 1945. They were supported by a cruiser, gun boats and air cover. After the bombardment and strafing of the beach area the LCIs were able to go right up on the beach. The landing was quiet, and the troops walked ashore

uncontested.



This photo shows LCI 701 strafing Calpi Point during the Dimasalang Operation.

Joe Gage: *We'd get 40-50- yards off the beach, drop our stern anchor and keep on going into the beach. We'd run right up on the beach. Our skipper was really good, he'd get as far up on that beach he could get. Many times, we'd let them off and they didn't even get wet. That was really something.*

After discharging troops, an LCI is lighter. The stern anchor cable is pulled back in powered by a car engine while the ship's engines are in full speed reverse. Once free of the beach the 1074 anchored offshore. They were now sitting ducks for a Japanese bomber that snuck into the bay from behind the Borneo mountains. It dropped a bomb that landed between the 1074 and an LST. Neither were damaged. Fortunately, they remained anchored in the bay. That night the Japanese mounted a counter-attack against the Australians. The 1074 was ordered back in to pick up retreating troops. "We went back into the beach dropped the ramp and boy they ran up that ramp, we took as many as we could hold," said Gage. "Next morning, we dropped the Australians back

on the beach and headed for Philippines. I don't know what ever happened to them."

The 1074 spent much of their time in the Philippines transporting guns and ammunition to the guerillas or transporting Japanese prisoners. Those who surrendered would be taken to POW barges anchored out in Leyte Bay.



Japanese POWs awaiting transfer to their prison camp which was an anchored barge.



Joe Gage: *We had barges at Leyte and they'd put the Japanese on the barges and put the barge out in the middle of the bay. Where the hell they gonna go? You don't need to have a whole crew of guards surrounding them, they are not going to go anyplace. They didn't cause any trouble. They were pretty docile.*



Japanese POWs board a vessel with their personal gear. No armed guard necessary. Their shirtless captors just watch the parade.

Gage was still in the Philippines when the war ended. He had served two years and had enough points for discharge. He told the skipper that he had enough points to get off. Lieutenant Harvey said, "Okay, I'll take you to shore." Gage was one of the first ones off the ship. He walked into the naval station and was on board a Liberty Ship for San Francisco a week later. From there he was sent back to the boot camp in Maryland.

Joe Gage: *I went all the way back to Bainbridge, Maryland for discharge. That camp was still there. It had improved a good bit. I went by troop train. It took five days. Back in Bainbridge they gave me my discharge papers, and that was the end of it.*

Gage went back to Philadelphia. He attended college and graduated from St. Joe's University in 1951 with a degree in accounting. He wound up in insurance sales for New York Life.

In later years he joined the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum group. He went out to Portland, Oregon to visit the *LCI(L)* 713 with his two sons. Nobody from his ship

were members. Many of his shipmates had already passed away.

Gage never followed through with any close navy relationships. But he never forgot the shipmates. He was the self-appointed ship's photographer. He had a Kodak camera and the equipment to develop and print film. His photos documented shipmates and events on *LCI(L)* 1074. He took photos at Mindanao, Cebu, Mendora, Tacloban, Masbate, Leyte and Luzon.

The medic on a ship this size was also the yeoman. A lot of the correspondence the skipper wanted was typed up by Gage. He knew where they were and the dates of events. He included that information on the face of many of his photos. This would ruin most photos. But he knew the historic importance would be lost if not identified for those viewing the photos after he was gone. Now these photos are archived at the National Museum of the Pacific War and shared here in the *Elsie Item*.

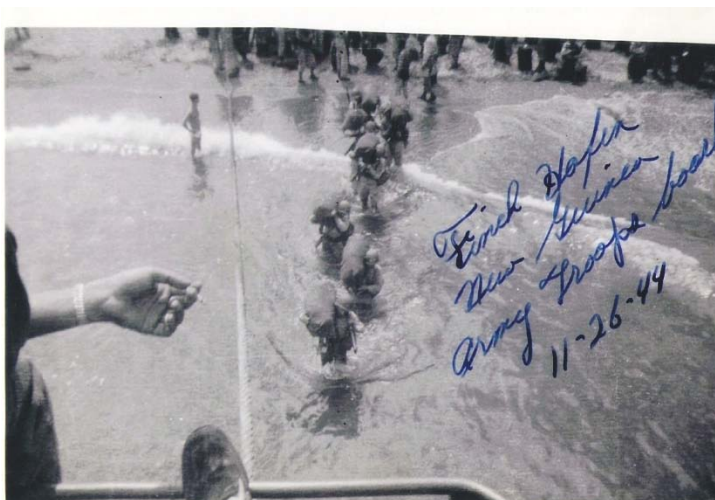
Joe Gage: *I profited a great deal from my participation in the war. I became a much better person from being in the service, I really did. My feelings about people, and getting along with people, and the shipboard experience was tremendous. You can't replace that. Especially this kind of a ship where there's a small group of guys and you're almost like - it's hard to say - but almost like brothers because you've been through so much together. I became a much, much, better person.*



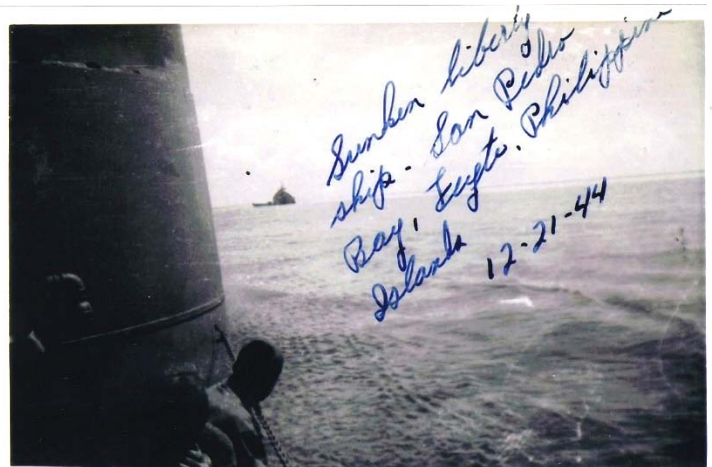
This photo is captioned, Filipino Guerillas at Claver Mindanao March 1945.



Red Beach on Leyte, Philippines December of 1944.



Gage captured this shot at New Guinea of Army troops boarding on 26 November 1944. They had full sea bags. Next stop was the Philippines.



This is a photo of a partially sunken liberty ship in San Pedro Bay, Philippines on 21 December of 1944. The LCI(L) 1074 arrived in Leyte Gulf that day.

SOURCE: The National Museum of the Pacific War, The Nimitz Education and Research Center in Fredericksburg, Texas – An Oral History Interview with Joseph Gage at Austin, Texas. February 1, 2016



Location and date unknown. One of the few photos that Gage failed to identify.

Getting Straightened Out

By Philip Chapirson

In 1944 I was living in St. Paul, Minnesota. I was 18 years old and in high school when I got drafted into the Navy. I had two older brothers. One was in the Army and the other in the Coast Guard.

I was sent to Farragut, Idaho to receive my basic training, then shipped to Newport Beach, California. That is where I picked up my ship *LCI(M) 802*. In January of 1945 we shipped overseas stopping at Pearl Harbor and then on to other islands. Our destination was Okinawa. We arrived a week before the invasion. Our job was to take UDT swimmers close to shore to map out the landing beach. After that we were assigned to making smoke screens for the larger ships to protect them from kamikaze attacks.

“I have memories of suicide planes”

The invasion began on 1 April 1945. We were there for three months, until victory. I have memories of the suicide planes, women holding children while jumping off a cliff, defeated Japanese on rafts escaping from Ie Shima where Ernie Pyle was killed.

On our way to invade Japan we were diverted (because of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) to China. We saw the Communist China take over. After three months in Tienstin, China (great duty) we came home.

I went to college on the G.I. bill, became a teacher and later a businessman in real estate. I still manage properties.

The most important result of my navy service is that it straightened me out.



Phillip Chapirson S1/c enlisted in the Navy on 8 August 1944 and joined the crew of LCI(M) 802 on 21 December 1944.

I feel grateful that I could serve my country. It helped me grow from a teenager to a man. I vowed to make something of my life if I survived the war.

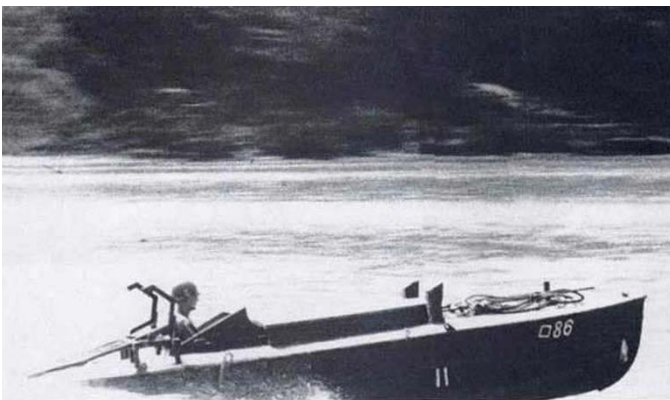
I want to thank my country for giving me the opportunity to succeed in business. I never felt entitled, but did things the “old fashioned way,” I *earned* it.

I would like to thank God for giving me the strength and courage to face life's challenges. You see, the “Love of my Life” my wife of 71 years has had Alzheimers disease for the past 10 years. My caregivers and I have vowed to make her life as happy and content as possible. We have succeeded.

History of LCI(M) 802

The 802 was laid down 26 July 1944 at New Jersey Ship Building Corp. in Barber, New Jersey. The ship was launched one month later on 25 August 1944 as *LCI(L)* 802. For armament she had five single 20mm guns. There was a need for gunboats to support landings in the Pacific. The 802s armament was increased to two 40mm guns, six 50cal machine guns and ten MK7 rocket launchers. The conversion was completed and on 31 December 1944 she was reclassified *LCI(G)* 802.

The 802 arrived for the assault on Okinawa 26 March 1945. Before the invasion the 802 provided support of the Underwater Demolition Teams who mapped the invasion beaches. LCI rocket gunboats were able to provide massive firepower while swimmers cleared obstacles and collected beach samples. On invasion day at Okinawa, they supported landing craft with the same firepower. Unlike previously contested invasions this one saw minimal opposition on the ground for the first week. Prior to L-Day hundreds of suicide boats were discovered hidden on the shores of the Kerama Retto islands. The 802 helped destroy them with their 20mm guns.



The bows of these high speed Shinyo Class suicide boats were packed with explosives.

The small island of Ie Shima, was invaded on 16 April. It was located just northwest of Okinawa and had an airfield needed for longer range attacks on Korea and Japan. It would have been a footnote battle in history had famed correspondent Ernie Pyle not been killed there. Over 4700 Japanese were killed in defense of the island. Few surrendered but some attempted escape on rafts.

***“Taking on any more
prisoners would add
unnecessary danger
to the crews”***

The LCIs 803 and 802 encountered several rafts while on patrol the night of 22 April. The 803 fired a burst alongside the enemy raft. The Japanese indicated they would surrender by tossing weapons over the side. They were told to remove all their clothes and were then brought on board. A search of the raft, their clothes and knapsacks found many hidden hand grenades, knives and other weapons that had not been tossed over the side. It was determined that taking on any more prisoners would add unnecessary danger to the crews. When other rafts were discovered, the 802 fired on them killing all on board. The rafts and prisoners were turned over to the Flotilla Commander.

Fortifications on Okinawa’s ridges and hilltops had stalled the U.S. ground troops. The network of tunnels and caves were described as an underground battleship. There was a new need for more targeted close in support that could reach the reverse

slopes of fortified hills. Rockets and naval guns were not able to reach those targets.

The 802 had been converted to a mortar gunboat. Three 4.2- inch chemical mortars had been added. They were mounted in three 4x4 foot wooden walled sand boxes on the well deck. The tripod mortar tubes were positioned to fire forward over the bow. The No. 2 troop compartment located under the well deck became a magazine. The ship was reclassified *LCI(M)* 802 on 30 April 1945.

Mortar Division Six included *LCI(M)s* 801- 806. When heavily fortified coastal positions were encountered by Marines on Okinawa, amphibious gunboats would be sent for close-in call-fire support. When not shelling the coastline defenses the gunboats would make smoke to hide larger ships from the constant threat of kamikaze attacks.

By mid-June the remnants of the Japanese forces were making a last stand at the southern tip of Okinawa. Their backs were to the sea. Mortar Division Six along with the 802 was called in to bombard a ridge top Japanese position near the village of Ibaru. This is where the crew of the 802 witnessed civilians jumping off cliffs to their death. Okinawan women had been told by the Japanese that they would be tortured and raped if captured by the Americans.

Action Report 25 June 1945: *The enemy forces in this area were reported to be the last organized group resisting the occupation of Okinawa Shima and were known to be within range of the weapons available on these vessels.*

During two days of bombardment the 802 expended 1,218 mortar shells. Their targets were not visible due to the cliffs and rough

terrain. The HQ 7th Infantry Division informed Mortar Division Six that the bombardment was excellent, and the results achieved were very good. The use of mortar fire on specific targets was very effective.

The battle for Okinawa was over by the end of June and the War ended on August 15th. The 802 was given a new mission in China.

Occupation in Tientsin, China was a relief for the 802 crew. This was the second largest port in China and fairly modern. The Chinese were happy to see the American sailors and Marines. Eighteen LCIs were initially sent to this port city. It was located inland from the coast on the Hai Ho River. Only ships under 300 feet long with a draft of less the 14 feet could get over the Taku Bar and navigate the harbor. This was a perfect fit for LCIs. All landings were covered by Mortar Support Division 6. The 802 was there for three months and finally sent home in January of 1946.



The LCIs 705, 802, 803, and 647 are nested alongside other larger ships.

Biscuits and Bisquick are a sailor's comfort food

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

When two old salts get to talking the conversation always turns to food. Liberty ports get discussed too, but food is something that can still be enjoyed. That was the case when Rich Lovell and Royal Wetzel spoke recently. Both have roots in Pennsylvania. Their mom's both believed that Bisquick would build strong bones. So, they both ate lots of it as kids.

The navies of the world have been feeding biscuits to their sailors for centuries. It was a British baker who came up with a recipe for self-rising flour. It became dietary fuel solution that was more palatable than the hardtack, weevil infested biscuits that were stored in barrels of sailing ships.

Ships bakers learned that poking holes in the top of each biscuit would allow moisture to escape. This keeps a biscuit from cracking apart during baking. Eventually all biscuits in the Royal Navy would have a pattern of 34 hole marks. This began in 1805 after 34 English ships won the Battle of Trafalger.

The tradition of fresh baked breads carried over to America's navy. The smell of bread baking is a fond memory for most sailors. So, when Rich and Royal began reminiscing about what they were fed as kids, the subject of Bisquick came up.

Bisquick was introduced to America by General Mills in 1931. An executive for the food company discovered the recipe while on a train trip. He was served fresh, hot biscuits with his meal. How did the cook do that in train kitchen, he wondered? He spoke

to the cook. The secret recipe was shared, and General Mills chemists refined it for shelf life. It became a depression era salvation for moms. It was cheap, versatile, and convenient. The Marketing slogan for Bisquick was "90 Seconds to the Oven."

Rich Lovell says, "I am full of Bisquick. Mom used to make what we called a PIG by lining a 9x9 baking pan with fruit and covering it with Bisquick." The PIG would be baked then turned upside down. Portions were dished out and served with milk and sugar. "That was dinner for four," he said.

Royal Wetzel's Bisquick memory is for Sausage Meatballs baked at 375 degrees for 15 minutes until brown.

Mix 2 # of Italian sausage-loose with 16 oz of sharp cheddar cheese. Add ½ C of celery-finely chopped, ½ C of onion-finely chopped, ½ tsp of garlic powder, and 1 ½ Cups of Bisquick mix. ROLL one- inch meatballs & place on ungreased baking sheet. Recipe makes about 72 meatballs.

Wetzel serves his meatballs with frozen tomato sandwiches (eat with knife & fork) Bread, Cheese, Mayo, & Creamed Horseradish, with thick tomato slices.



You won't see these recipes anywhere else. Membership in the LCI National Association has exclusive benefits. Enjoy.



CMDR Bill Keeler Laid to Rest at Arlington National Cemetery

The Drums began the cadence. We were gathered together, excited, teary and sad. Family, friends, relatives, and several young Naval personnel. It started with the sound of shouted commands: “Preee – Zennnt – Harms!”; “Orr-dahh—Harms!”; and “Faw--waaadd – Marrcch!” We all began the slow, solemn procession to the beat of a drum cadence. Before this, we watched as the American flag and the urn of Commander William E. Keeler were placed in the casket with Military rigor. The casket was borne on a caisson drawn by six white horses, led by the Naval Honor Guard Escort including a guidon bearer, drummer, and six young sailors.

The Officer in Charge of the team shouted the commands; and the escort began: The flags, drum, horse-caisson and those bidding farewell to Commander William E. Keeler: Father, Grandfather, Great-Grandfather, Daddy Bill, “Grandpa Grape,” In-law, Uncle, Cousin and Friend. Slowly, ever so

slowly the caisson rolled forward toward his final resting place. The young liaison, Michael, had instructed us regarding this event. He explained that the Naval Honor Guard would place Bill’s Ashes and Flag within the casket. The assembly would walk to the gravesite. There the Honor Guard would place his Ashes in position and the American flag would be unfurled over the site by the Honor Guard.

The Naval Chaplain provided a summary of Commander Keeler’s life, his contribution to the military, his faith in Jesus Christ and the recognition of Bill’s role with his family. She concluded the service with a prayer and then, the lead officer sounded “Preee – Zennnt – Harms!” The twenty-one-gun salute commenced, (seven sailors, three volleys), followed by taps (the soulful music only accompanied by the birds). Poignant moments for each of us. Following this honor, six young men holding the flag over the site of Bill’s urn began the task of folding the flag into a triangle, and then delivered it to Commander Keeler’s son,

John, with kind words scripted by our Nation: “As a representative of the United States Navy, it is my high privilege to present to you this flag. Let it be a symbol of the appreciation this nation feels for the distinguished service rendered to our country, and to our flag by your loved one.”

The Chaplain then concluded the service with a Prayer and Benediction. The Officer in Charge then repeated commands to dismiss the Honor Guard. As those men and women returned to their duties, we could not be more touched that these young sailors would show such reverence, honor, and respect, to our “Daddy Bill.” Their every move: marching in formation, standing at attention, and folding the flag was striking. Thank you to the sailors honoring Commander William E. Keeler, his family and friends. We are grateful for their escort, assistance, and service.

Reported by Joe Krause



Aboard the Carrier Midway Museum: Proposal in the Potato Locker

By Joe Flynn

CMDR Bill Keeler was a long-time member of the USS LCI National Association, and the California State LCI Association. He had retired to Coronado, CA to be close to his Navy and close to the Pacific Ocean. He rarely missed a National or State reunion and enjoyed the company of LCI sailors.

When the US entered WW II, Bill left Kansas, joined the Navy and ended up as the Skipper of LCI 432 and 615. After the War Bill became a pilot and made a career of the Navy flying off carriers. Along the way, Bill was married, and raised a family.

Years after his wife had passed, Bill made contact with a lady, named Betty, whom he had dated before the War. She too had married, raised a family, and had also lost her husband. We were having a small California LCI reunion in San Diego, and Bill decided to bring Betty to the event.

Just below the flight deck was the “Potato Locker”

One of our outings was a tour of the Midway Aircraft Carrier Museum, which can take time. So, we broke for early afternoon lunch on the Fantail Café. Bill told us when the Midway was on active duty, the space we were in, just below the flight deck, was the “Potato Locker.” This area held tons of potatoes for a hungry crew. In carrier landings, Bill said this was one place you did not want to put your plane.

“And he popped the question”

During conversation, Bill and Betty told us how they had got back in touch and had been seeing each other for some time. Always looking for a good story for the Elsie Item, I asked. “Well Bill, have you asked this young lady to marry you yet”? Bill never lost a beat and said, “No, but I guess this is as good place as any.” And he popped the question and Betty accepted. They were married shortly thereafter in Kansas, their home state.



It was like the 1940s again at an LCI reunion in 2010 at Cincinnatti. Bill and Betty Keeler loved dancing to the “big band” music.

As Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Betty attended many LCI Reunions. They were usually the first on the dance floor and the last to leave. Their home was in Kansas, but they enjoyed many trips to San Diego and Coronado.

LeRoy A. Olson, LCI Calendar Dynamo

The LCI Association with, the passing of LeRoy A. Olson, has lost one of its early and effective supporters.

Starting in 2002, LeRoy along with Jim McCarthy published eight years of LCI Calendars with photos of ships, invasion actions from Omaha Beach to Okinawa, and detailed information on LCI's. The calendars included the dates of invasions, and LCI ship losses. LeRoy used skills from his publishing industry career to produce the calendars. And from information I gained later, I learned that both Olson and McCarthy heavily subsidized these calendars. They served as a basic introduction to LCI's and a great source of term papers for middle and high school students.

LeRoy's jovial presence at reunions will be sorely missed.

Joe Flynn



Leroy Olson at the 2017 LCI Reunion in Portland, Oregon.



Bob Hope and Company a World War II Photo

In the summer of 1944 Bob Hope hopped from island to island in the South Pacific to entertain the troops. It was an emotional, as well as dangerous, journey for Hope and his colleagues. He logged over 30,000 miles and gave more than 150 performances. Accompanying Hope on the trip were guitarist Tony Romano, singer Frances Langford, dancer Patty Thomas, and gag-writer and Hope chum, Barney Dean.

Above: Guitarist Tony Romano accompanies Frances Langford in an impromptu performance in 1944. (Library of congress)



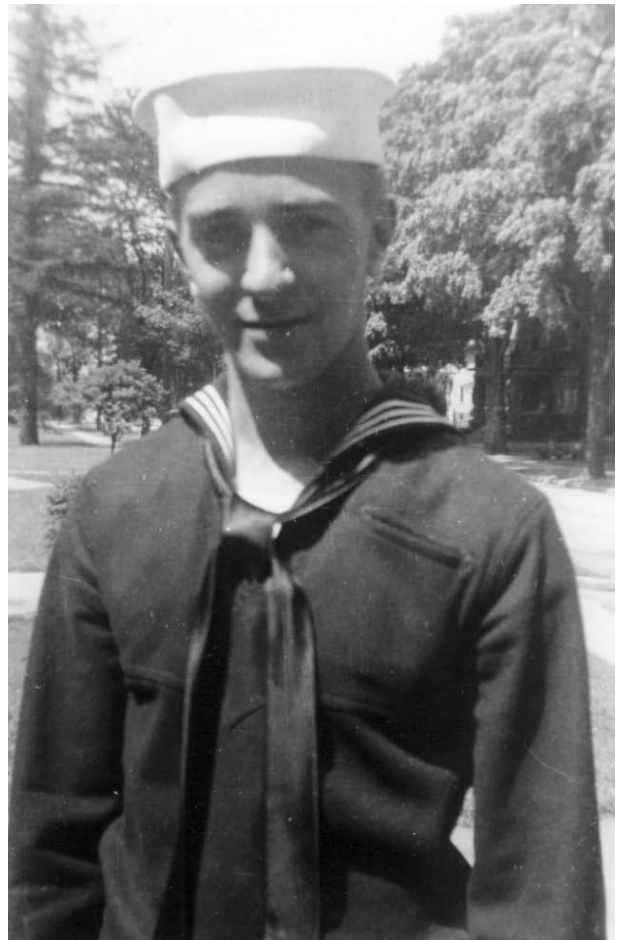
Pityilu Island is in the Admiralty Islands off the northern coast of Manus. It was invaded on 30 March 1944 by a unit of the 7th Cavalry. A Navy airstrip was built. A rest and recreation facility for up to 10,000 men was also established. LCI(L) 1074 made a stop there for R&R.

In Memoriam

Edwin E. Moser MoMM 2/c

Honoring the life of Edwin Eugene Moser 1921-2021. He enlisted in the Navy May of 1944 serving in the South Pacific theatre on board *USS LCI(M) 1088*. He returned home to Rockford, IL and worked at Barber-Coleman Tool & Die. Ed later founded several companies involving tool & die and precision plastics while raising a family of six children with his love Marguerite. He was married for 75 years.

Thomas Moser USAF, John Moser USAF, and the Moser family will forever respect and admire him.



Motor Machinist Mate Edwin E. Moser was on the LCI(M) 1088.

The June 2021 issue of ELSIE ITEM honored Moser as “The oldest living LCI veteran”. He passed away on June 19th at the age of 100.

Moser met his wife Marguerite Wagner at a skating rink in Rockford. One of the companies he founded was named Mo-Mac Manufacturing, obviously a reference to his Motor Mac training in the Navy.

The *1088* was built at Defoe Shipbuilding in Bay City Michigan. His ship was one of the many LCIs that joined the Asiatic-Pacific Campaigns by way of the Great Lakes, Mississippi River and Panama Canal. The ship served at Okinawa and was assigned to Occupation service in the Far East from September to November 1945.



The Navy Honor Guard at Edwin E. Moser's funeral in Rockford, Illinois June 21, 2021

His best friend aboard ship was William “Jingles” Obrien from Madison, Wisconsin. They lived just 70 miles apart and stayed in touch after the war. Obrien became locally famous in Madison when he opened his Stadium Bar. It was within cheering distance of Camp Randall Stadium at the University of Wisconsin. Badger fans always called the bar “Jingles,” and it was a must stop on game days for several decades. Moser would drive up from Rockford to watch the Badgers play football. He’d always stop by to see his buddy Jingles at the Stadium Bar after the game.



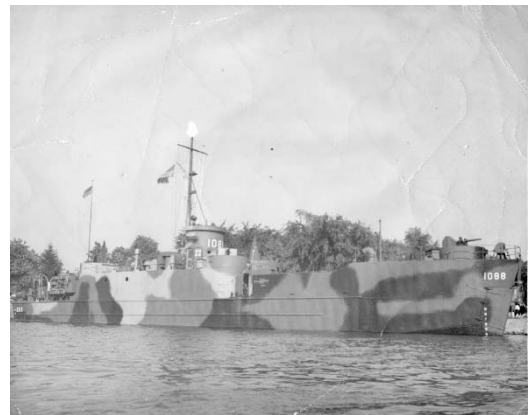
William “Jingles” Obrien and Ed Moser were shipmates on LCI(M) 1088 and lifelong friends.

Obrien provided an oral history interview at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in 1999. He mentioned Moser in his interview.

William “Jingles” Obrien: *I have one guy from the 1088 that I run into. He’s from Rockford. Ed Moser. I see him once in a while. He comes up for football games and he stops, especially when I still had the Stadium Bar. I saw him here a couple of years ago.*

Obrien provided many interesting accounts of his time aboard the 1088 with his buddy Moser. At Okinawa they were part of the invasion on 1 April 1945. “We went in there at Yellow Beach,” said Obrien. “We were in the first wave. The Army figured that they would get Yontan airstrip in three days, well, they had it in three hours.” When the battle moved to the Capitol City of Naha, the 1018 lobbed over 800 mortar rounds on the defenders. The 1018 crew saw many kamikaze attacks including the one that hit the battleship West Virginia. “A big powder ring just came up afterwards, it was gruesome,” said Obrien.

More of Obrien’s interview will publish in a future *Elsie Item*.



USS LCI(M) 1088 painted in a camouflage pattern is ready to go to war.

The Forgotten War

Part 1 by Robert Wright

The War in the Pacific is and was often referred to as the “Forgotten War.” To the men who were sent there to hold back the Japanese Empire, it was “The War.” It mattered little to them as to what was happening elsewhere in the world conflict. They were singularly consumed by their day to day struggle against the Japanese Imperial Forces.

By the end of 1943 the Joint Allied Forces in the European and North African Waters Theater of Operations had successfully completed three major amphibious assaults against determined opposition; the first was on Atlantic and North Africa coasts, followed by landings on the island of Sicily and the last at Salerno, Italy. Deployed in the last two operations were hundreds of the new Landing Craft Infantry from both the Royal Navy of England and United States Navy.

A short two years earlier, these versatile craft had existed only on the drafting boards of marine architects in the United States. Yet in those two years, these designs became the plans for Atlantic and Gulf shipyards from which these ships were constructed, launched and commissioned. During that same period the United States Navy had recruited men, and trained them as officers and crewmen at bases in Maryland and Virginia, and then deployed these ships

and men across an ocean where they now were fighting and winning a brutal war.

In the Pacific things were a bit different for the Amphibious Forces who had been sent there. In January 1943 the Allied leaders had met at Casablanca and concluded an agreement that Nazi Germany would be the initial focus of the war effort and after its defeat, their combined war efforts would then be directed against the Japanese Empire. As a result, Amphibious Landing Craft in any number only began to reach the Southwest Pacific in December of 1942.

The ships of LCI Flotilla Seven, were assigned to the Southwest Pacific Force, operating in New Guinea began to reach the area in April 1943. By end December 1943, only 23 of 24 of Flotilla Seven remained after *LCI(L) 339* had been sunk during the Landings at Lae. The remainder of the 12 LCI assigned to the flotilla were still in transit, from the shipyards of the United States. In the Solomon Islands LCI Flotilla Five had been assigned to the Third Fleet, Third Amphibious Force, and was operating with a total 33 LCIs.

Training of Amphibious Ships

In the early period of activity in the Southwest Pacific Area, no organized training program (similar to that of the Amphibious Training Base at Bizerte, North Africa) for ships and landing craft could be adopted. Ships had to be constantly engaged in troop training or in moving Army units to forward areas in preparation for imminent amphibious operations. However, the

operations for occupation of Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands in June 1943 revealed the definite need for ship training, and as a result, an intensive ship training program was carried out in the Townsville-Cairns area of Australia prior to the first assault landing at Lae in September 1943. Narrative History Seventh Amphibious Force 10 January 1943 - 23 December 1945

“I Shall Return”

General Douglas MacArthur, after his humiliating defeat in early 1942 as the commander of the Philippine Defense Forces, was placed in command of the entire South West Pacific Theater in April 1942. His singular obsession appeared to be too “correct” what was another blemish on his military record with as much publicity as possible.

MacArthur’s former aide, Dwight Eisenhower, now a four Star General, was in command of the largest military force in the history of the United States. General Eisenhower was the subject all of the adulation in the press, with the Allied successes in African and Italian campaigns and impending invasion on the French coast.

In the Mediterranean Theater, combined allied forces had completed two successful full-frontal assaults against the German and Italian forces, enabled by their greater resources of men, ships, aircraft, equipment, and supplies. It had taken approximately one month for each shipload of the vast quantities war materials required to travel from ports on the United States east coast to that war zone.

General MacArthur needed action from his much smaller force against superior Japanese Army, Naval and Air Forces. In 1942 in the SWPA he had command of only 2 untrained US Army Divisions, the 32nd and 41st and the Australian 7th which had returned from the Mediterranean to defend their homeland. Falling under his command were the US Fifth Air Force and the US Navy Seventh Fleet, Amphibious Force which at that time consisted of a few destroyers, APDs, APcs, LSTs, LCIs and LCTs including support vessels.

In September 1942, McArthur lacking the amphibious resources that Eisenhower had at his disposal, ordered the 32nd Division to take Buna on the northern New Guinea coast by marching 130 miles overland through jungles from Port Moresby on the south coast to Buna on the north coast. This was merely the reverse of the Japanese assault from Buna that failed to reach Port Moresby months earlier.

MacArthur’s counter-attack was a response of now obsolete WWI battle tactics much the same manner as he commanded from the far rear and ordered the Allied troops to take the objective without knowledge of the actual conditions or the tactical situation in the field. He then blamed the field commanders for all the failures of the repeated frontal assaults against entrenched positions. In January 1943 the Japanese secretly withdrew their starving force from Buna.

Of the 9,825 men of the US Army 32nd Division who entered combat, the division

suffered 2,520 battle casualties, including 586 *killed in action*. More telling was the huge numbers who were casualties due to illness: 7,125 (66%, with 2,952 requiring hospitalization), and 100 more died from other causes. The total casualty count of 9,956 exceeded the division's entire battle strength. - Wikipedia 32 Infantry Division

The combined US Army 32nd and Australian 7th Divisions had been victorious but at a appalling cost of approximately 8,500 (5,700 Australians) casualties including 2,400 killed (1,800 Australians).

MacArthur quickly claimed full credit for the victory.

“The cost of each victory had taken full divisions out of combat”

MacArthur learned some valuable military lessons from the Buna campaign. In the South Pacific, by early 1943, there had been two decisive victories against the Japanese land forces. But the cost of each victory had taken full divisions out of combat. These were the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions, on Guadalcanal, and the US Army 32nd Division in the Buna campaign.

To succeed and minimize casualties, MacArthur had to make his attack where the enemy was most vulnerable and unable to rapidly deploy a counter offensive. These would begin at the very edge of the Japanese conquests of 1942 and at distance 4,000 miles for Japanese to move war supplies that they required, to be shipped by Tokyo by way of the Philippines.

The Allied Pacific Command faced an ever-greater hurdle with the supply situation. Supply ships leaving Los Angeles in convoys often took 60 days or more on the 7,000- mile sea route to Australia, which was the Allied base of operations in 1943. The distance, was even longer if they took the San Francisco – Pearl Harbor – Sydney route.

The one supply advantage that the Allies had in their favor was the effective use of submarines by the US Navy Pacific Fleet against the Japanese Merchant Marine. The success of their attacks prevented a substantial number of reinforcements and tons of supplies from ever reaching the Japanese forces in the field.

In January 1943, General MacArthur, and Admiral Nimitz of the US Pacific Fleet concurred on a strategic plan to take the stronghold of Rabaul, on Island of New Britain. Rabaul was the center of Japanese operations in the Southwest Pacific. The overall plan was code named Cartwheel. It included numerous major amphibious sub-operations, each with their own code names, such as Goodtime, and Toenails.

Operation Cartwheel was conceived as a pincher movement with MacArthur's Army force and the US Navy's 7th Fleet eliminating Japanese threat along the New Guinea coast. Admiral Halsey, now commanding the 3rd Fleet with the First Marine Amphibious Corps, and the US Army XIV Corps would battle the Japanese in the adjacent Solomon Islands.

The plan called for a series of operations by each force which progressed in a westward arch that would result in cutting off all support to the main Japanese naval and air bases in the Southwest Pacific at Rabaul. Cartwheel would conclude with an amphibious assault on this base to eliminate all remaining Japanese forces.

But 6000 miles to the North

Elsewhere in the Pacific more men, ships, and supplies had been diverted to another battle. In May of 1942 Japanese forces had occupied Attu and Kiska in the American Aleutian Islands. It was then part of the Japanese strategy to create a defensive perimeter around the Japanese homeland after Doolittle's famous raid on Tokyo.

“The casualty rate suffered to retake Attu shocked the US Army planners”

On May 11, 1943 the Army launched amphibious assault on Attu which successfully retook the island after a stubborn and determined defense by the Japanese forces there. The casualty rate suffered to retake Attu shocked the US Army planners. The operation to land on Kiska was already on the table and there was no desire to see this repeated.

The plan to take Kiska now called for an attack force that could simply overwhelm the Japanese defenders. 34,000 troops from the United States and Canada were assembled at staging points east of Kiska.

As d-day of August 16, 1943 approached, the men were loaded on to the

troop transports ships and the LCI's of Flotilla 3 and headed to Kiska in the fog. Reaching the landing beaches, there was no bloody opposition by a suicidal enemy force, just abandoned and silent defenses. The Japanese had skillfully withdrawn weeks earlier under the cover of clouds and fog.

This is a story about LCI's

LCIs were few and far between in the Pacific theater of the War in 1943. LCI Flotilla 3 had been formed in Texas from the newly commissioned Landing Craft Infantry. After two months of preparation and a new jungle camouflage paint job, they departed Galveston on March 16, 1943, and headed to the Pacific. They arrived in San Diego after the transit through the Panama Canal on April 8, 1943. There they made voyage repairs and began their amphibious training.

On May 17, 1943 these LCIs were sent north to Fort Ord, Monterey, CA, to train with army troops. Then to Mare Island in San Francisco Bay for more repairs on June 29th and a new Navy Grey paint job. On July 15, they continued up the coast to Seattle, WA where they stocked up with the necessary supplies for the upcoming voyage. They departed Seattle on July 24, 1943, destination; the US Navy base at Kodiak Alaska. The 9 LCIs of Flotilla 3 were the 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 346, 347, and 348.

R. William Clark, an officer aboard the *LCI(L) 77* wrote a narrative of their adventure. The following are excerpts which

probably represent the experiences of all of the LCIs of the Flotilla 3 in that campaign.

Most of the trip along the Aleutian Island was made in fog. When they neared what they thought was Kodiak, they proceeded towards their supposed landfall with much trepidation, the shoreline was invisible. To find the inlet to Kodiak harbor, they moved toward the beach slowly with a boatswain at the bow using a lead line calling out the water depths until they could hear the surf. They would back off to try again until they found the entrance. This was the same technique used in the 18th century by the first explorers.

“Life aboard the LCIs could only be classified as miserable”

After all the usual preparations, the ships got underway on August 10 for Amchitka Island; 150 miles through the fog. Life aboard the LCI's could only be classified as miserable, everyone was cold all the time and the weather was bad. To make matters worse, there were 209 Army troops aboard. It only took a day to make it to Constantini Harbor, Amchitka Island. The troop/passengers ate ashore as the ship did not carry enough provisions for them.

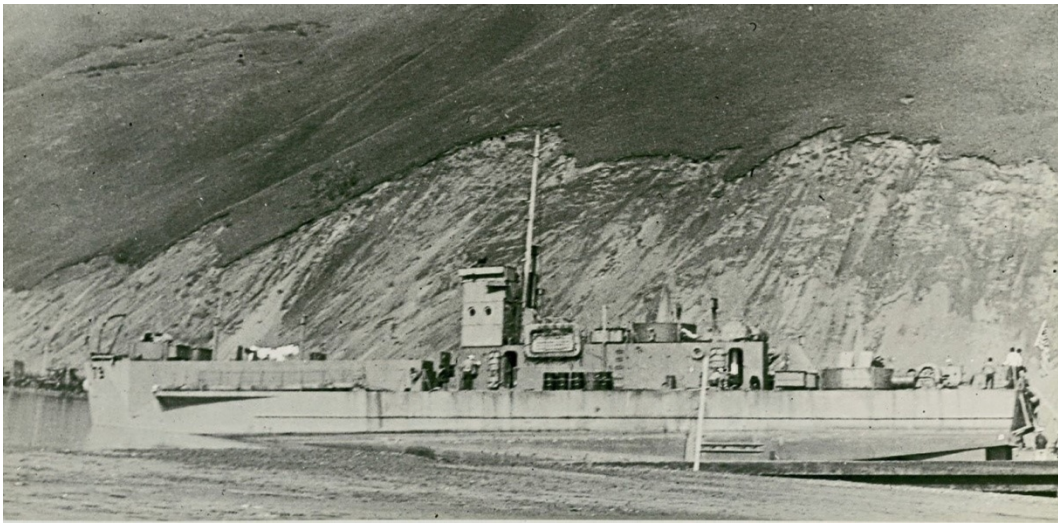
On 15 August, with the passengers aboard in company with 78, 79, 80, 81, and 82, they left for Kiska. They joined a convoy of LST's and LCT's headed by a destroyer for the 100 miles to the destination. At 0659 on the 16th, they located "Green Beach",

Kiska, where they beached with no gunfire or opposition. By 0712 all troops were ashore and the ship retracted. The California training paid off, it took just 13 minutes to do the job, this first time under combat conditions. The "beaches" in Kiska were far different from those they had practiced on originally; these were made up of black rocks varying in size from a baseball to a volleyball. As 77 approached, everyone was concerned about what these they would do to the ¼ inch thick hull. There were numerous "permanent waves" in it but there were no leaks or holes resulting from this harsh treatment.

That day and the next, 77 made a total of five beachings to land 1,279 troops (840 were Canadians). This was a small part of the 34,000 U.S. and Canadian troops in this operation.

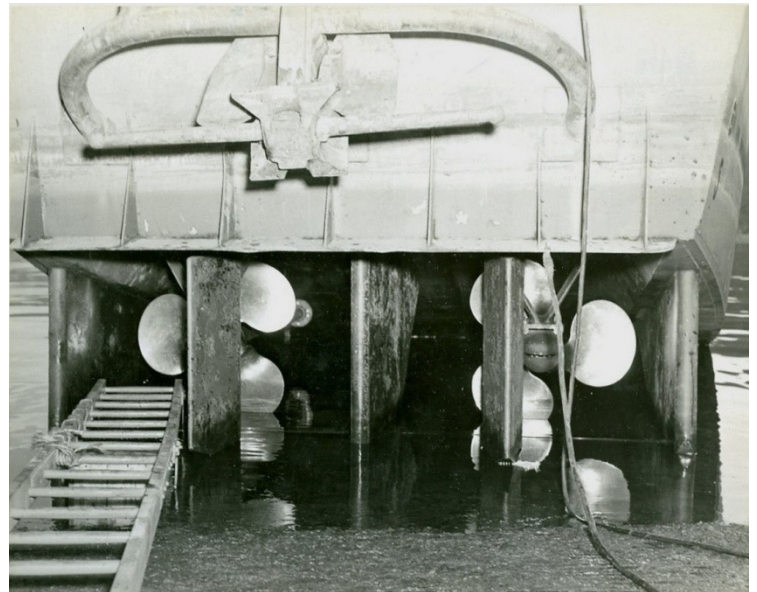
Just after midnight on the 27th the area was hit by a terrific "williwaw", a sudden high intensity windstorm that seems to blow from every point of the compass at once. It caused many of the ships to drag anchor. They had to start the engines, pull in the anchor, and get underway to find another spot with better holding ground. This sudden unexpected activity took place above and below decks in the dark of night with a bitter cold wind blowing.

For the next couple of weeks there was little for the ships to do but exist in this completely miserable part of the world. The 77 was hauled stern first onto



LCI(L) 79 on the Seaplane Ramp Kodiak Alaska. Stern of LCI(L) 79 resting out of the water for repairs.

Stern view of the LCI(L) 82 variable pitch propellers while on the seaplane ramp at Kiska Alaska.



The LCI(L)s of Flotilla 3 at Kodiak Alaska on August 1, 1943 after the 15 day voyage from Seattle WA. LCI(L) 82 is identifiable as the first ship in the nest

the beach with the bow anchor out so a split seam in the steering engine room could be welded.

The ships received a most welcome supply of sweaters knitted by the ladies of the American Red Cross.

A couple of times the special sea detail was set, and the engines were running all day because the strong wind might cause the anchor to drag again.

“The morale of the crew was very, very low”

September 20 1943 LT(jg) C. W. Fogg USNR was ordered to relieve LT(jg) N. P. Vest, USNR. Vest had served as commanding officer only 75 days. Due to this sudden change in command, the miserable physical conditions, along with the unending rotten weather, the morale of everyone aboard was very, very low. It was with great joy they heard their next port would be Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii! All hands wasted little time going through the routine of getting the ship ready for sea. (That trip is another story for later.)

Back to MacArthur

The original timetable for Operation Cartwheel was for operations to commence on April 1, 1943. But continued supply issues and the lack of amphibious vessels, including LCIs and LSTs in the Southwest Pacific delayed any movements until June

1943. But once Operations began, they continued at an astonishing pace.

Jun. 30, 1943: Simultaneous Landings on Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands off New Guinea and Landing at Nassau Bay, New Guinea and Rendova, New Georgia, Solomon Islands

Aug. 15, 1943: Landings on Vella Lavella, Solomon Islands

Sep. 16, 1943: Landing at Lae, New Guinea

Sep. 22, 1943: Landing at Finschhafen, New Guinea

Oct. 27, 1943: Landings on the Treasury Islands, Solomon Islands

Nov. 1, 1943: Landings on Bougainville

Dec. 15, 1943: Landings on Arawe, on New Britain, Solomon Islands

Dec. 15, 1943: Landing at Cape Gloucester on New Britain, Solomon Islands

1943 had come to a close. It had been 2 years since the US was attacked at Pearl Harbor. Now “The War” was just beginning for the men and ships who would define the term Amphibious Warfare in the Pacific.

In a future Issue I will be covering more of the Solomon Operations at Vella Lavella, the Treasury Islands and the Green Islands.

EDITORS NOTE for reference: in earlier issues of the ELSIE ITEM, we have covered the LCI experiences during landings at Rendova (see issues # 86) and Lae (issues # 98 and 99, available online at USSLCI.org).

Officers and Executive Board

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

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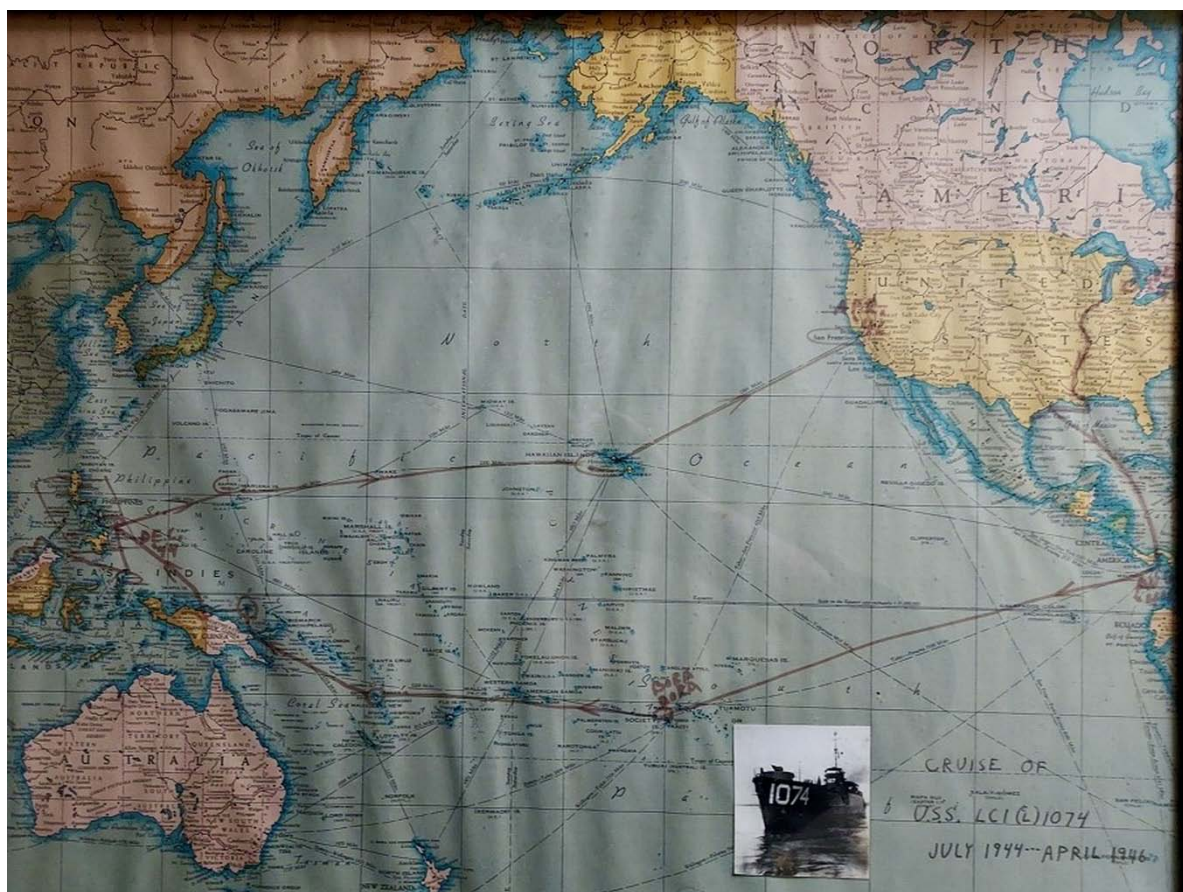
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Attention LCI Veterans and Associates
We need your stories now. Write or email John France.

C/O Robert E. Wright, Jr. President/Treasurer

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Cruise of the LCI(L) 1074 - This map depicts the 1074's route from Bay City, Michigan, down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico and Panama Canal, then across to Bora Bora, the islands of the Pacific, back to Pearl Harbor and California. It was created by J.L. Miller the XO and shared by his family. See shipmate Joseph Gage's story and photos in this issue.