



# Elsie Item

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

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**ULITHI LAGOON**  
**20 November 1944**



## Inside this issue...

- The Forgotten War Part 4 Bougainville
- Naval training in Farragut, Idaho
- LCIs encounter kaiten suicide subs
- LCI sailor awarded Legion of Honor



## 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
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#### THE STORIES

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#### THE ELSIE ITEM

- Recent Articles Available Online\*
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#### 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/](https://usslci.org/share-your-story/). Any letter to the editor can be sent to **Jeff Veesenmeyer** ([JeffreyMktg@gmail.com](mailto: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** from Robert E. Wright Jr.

**Membership Renewals 2023:** As of 2/7/2023, there are only 45 members who have not returned their renewal forms. Please take some time and do that today!

**Note to widows:** I will mail your renewal form March 2023.

For the majority who have renewed, I want to express a sincere "Thank You!" I also appreciated the many notes that were included with the renewals expressing your appreciation that we have been able to keep the association active.

As of February 12, 2023, we have had **38** of the WWII veterans re-up their enlistment in the Association for 2023. This is becoming a very small number of WWII veterans as we are all well aware. But our USS National Landing Craft Infantry National Association continues to be one of the few remaining and still active WWII Veteran Associations.

This year donations made by members to the Association have remained steady. As a result, we shall continue to provide the expanded version of the ELSIE ITEM that we began two years ago.

**The continued version of the EXPANDED ELSIE ITEM:** I want to thank our members, who are still contributing stories included in many of the articles that were published during 2022. I also need to thank our editor, Jeff Veesenmeyer, for his expertise and assistance in getting each issue out the door. During 2022, I wrote more in-depth articles covering some of the events that impacted the Amphibious Forces in the South Pacific in 1943. For this issue, while still covering these naval operations, I am using more pictures and fewer words. I hope that you enjoy it. If so, let me know. If you don't, send your "complaints" to our editor Jeff and he will give me the word. We know that there are still many amazing stories to be told.

**Update on your Association Officers:** Last month I notified the Association members that our Vice President, Rich Lovell was seriously ill. Rich felt that due to this illness, he could no longer hold his office. Rich has taken a leave of absence during his extended recovery. John France the Association's Historian and former President has agreed to act as Vice President in the interim. I wish to acknowledge and thank John for his commitment to the Association. Rich is still active on his email, for any member who wishes to contact him.



## Gator Gossip

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

I have an update for requesting a “complementary” deck log from The National Archives. I reported in Elsie Item 119 to expect delays due to a backlog caused by the pandemic. But the service for deck log requests has improved with their new website.

I received my “complimentary 20 to 25 days” of deck log about two weeks after it was ordered. I knew my dad’s ship *LSM(R) 411* was enroute to Pearl Harbor when the war ended. I didn’t know when he got there or how long he stayed. I asked for the days of 15 August 1945 to 5 September 1945. I thought there might be some noticeable change in daily shipboard life once they knew the war was over. There wasn’t. They continued to exercise general quarters, 40 mm firing, and abandon ship drills. Lots of “Underway as before,” entries until they reached Pearl Harbor on 23 August 1945. Then lots of “Moored as before” entries while at Pearl Harbor. For several days his ship was moored alongside *LCI(L) 569* that had been converted to a flotilla flagship and was designated as LC(FF) Flot 23 Group 68 Division 136.

With my complementary deck log, I learned the where-abouts and daily shipboard routines on *LSM(R) 411* during those last days of the war. And it was free. You can start your search by emailing [archives2reference@nara.gov](mailto:archives2reference@nara.gov)

Hello, Jeff,

I want to tell you what an excellent job you did by ACCURATELY putting together all the facts on the *LCI-713*’s story of Doug Bowker and his model (Issue 119 Winter 2022). It’s the first time I’ve ever contributed to an article or newspaper interview where everything was tied up so perfectly. You really are an organized writer! After I gave you my contributions, I thought for sure I’d hear from you again for some clarifications, but...nope! You did it all yourself. Mind like a steel trap, they’d say. Carry on Jeff!

Thanks,

*Sharon Anderson – Millbury Historical Society*

**Editor’s Correction:** I received a call from Bill Mercer *LCI(G) 439* regarding the identification of his ship on the cover of Elsie Item #119. His ship was commissioned as an *LCI(L)* on 6 August 1943. It was converted to an *LCI(G)* with guns and rockets on 15 January 1944. I thought it had received a third designation as *LCI(R)*. I was wrong. It was struck from the Naval Register in 1946 and was still *LCI(G) 439*.

**SEND LETTERS & PHOTOS TO:**  
**[JeffreyMktg@gmail.com](mailto:JeffreyMktg@gmail.com) or my mailing address (Contact Us) inside front cover.**



# In Memoriam

LCI 88

John W. “Crofty” Croft

LCI 234

Clinton DeVier

HMCS LCI 249

W.J. “Bill” Gunther

LCI 354

J. Merle Smith

LCI 626

August D. “Gus” Dindia

LCI 355, 675

Alfred Wagonner

LCI 689

John Beahm

LCI 769

Joseph Hickey

LCI(M) 809

Herry Baxter

LCI Unknown

John R. Hoff





## LCI Crews Witness Secret Weapon

*By Jeff Veesenmeyer*

A light tropical breeze blew over Ulithi Lagoon the morning of 20 November 1944. As the sun peeked over the horizon the temperature quickly rose into the eighties. Reveille was being announced at 0530 on hundreds of ships anchored in the massive lagoon. *LCI(G) 79* was among them.

Lt.(jg) J.E. Lewis was in command of the *LCI(G) 79*. His ship had been converted to a gunboat six months earlier. He now had a crew of 65 enlisted and 5 officers. They were anchored several hundred yards north of the huge auxiliary oiler USS *Mississinewa* (AO-59). Crewmembers nicknamed AO-59 the “Mighty Miss,” which was less of a tongue twister. Eight more oilers were parked near *LCI 79*. The

oilers were essential to keeping the Pacific fleet fueled and moving ever closer to Japan.



*USS LCI(G) 79 rescued 87 USS Mississinewa crewmembers at Ulithi.*

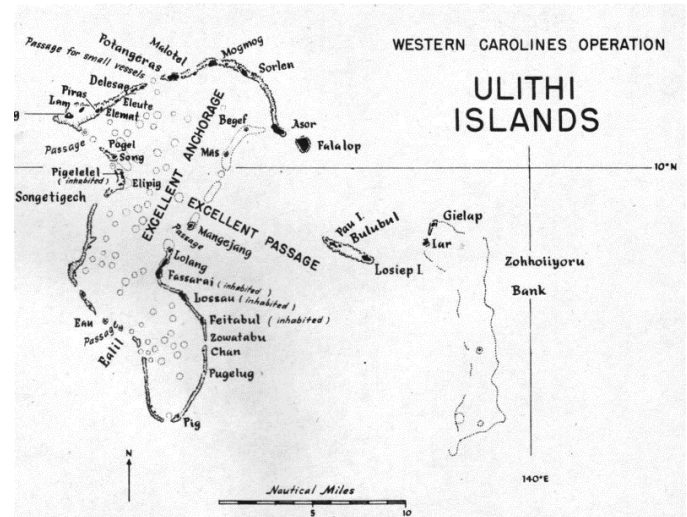
Ulithi Atoll was formed by 30 coral islands that formed a deep-water lagoon 20 miles long and 10 miles wide. Admiral

Chester Nimitz found it on his charts and realized it was the perfect staging area for campaigns in the Philippines and Okinawa. In just a few months, Seabees built a naval base that became the largest in the world. By March of 1945 over 600 ships would be anchored at Ulithi. Japan's military saw Ulithi as a target bigger than Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese navy was in shambles after defeats at Midway and Leyte Gulf. A new weapon had been developed to stop or slow down the island-hopping advances by the U.S. Navy. The *kaiten* was designed for attacking ships at anchor or near land. It was a manned torpedo/submarine with a range of about 40 miles. It would be launched from a submerged mother sub a safe distance from a target. Four *kaitens* could be harnessed to the deck of a mother sub. This weapon was so secret that most of Japan's naval commanders had no knowledge of its existence. *kaiten* pilots were instructed to detonate their torpedo/sub if a mission had to be aborted to avoid discovery. This act was referred to as "self-determination." The Japanese never considered an intentional act to die for the emperor as suicide. It was an honor. Once launched there was no escape or coming back for the pilot.

The *kaiten* pilots were recruited from navy aviation ranks. All were volunteers who hoped to honor their Emperor by sinking a major warship. The attack planned for Ulithi involved three mother subs and 12 *kaitens*. A diversion attack was planned for the Palau anchorage, located to the southwest of Ulithi. Four *kaitens* would be launched from mother sub *I-37* first. Counterparts to the mission would launch

eight more *kaitens* from *I-36* and *I-47* before sunup 20 November at Ulithi.



*Ulithi Lagoon could provide a deep-water anchorage for up to 700 ships. It became a floating service station.*

At 0418 a huge explosion was witnessed by lookouts on board the survey ship *USS Sumner*. They saw a flash of light rising skyward at the southern tip of Ulithi Atoll. It was thought to be a drifting mine that encountered the reef. Explosions were common and no alarm was communicated to ships. This was in fact one of the *kaitens*. He was far off target and either hit a reef or self-detonated when his mission had failed.

**At 0523 a periscope was spotted by lookouts on minesweeper *USS Vigilance* outside of Mugai Channel.** Nearby ships were alerted. The periscope chase ended when *USS Case* rammed what they thought was a two-man mini-sub. Now, all ships were alerted of possible enemy intrusion to the lagoon. Destroyers were on search and destroy missions. *Kaitens* were just 54 feet long. They were easily missed on sonar. Oilers, LCIs and support ships were still beginning their day in mostly normal fashion. The master at arms on the "Mighty

Miss” banged on the rails with a pipe to announce reveille to those sleeping on deck. Men were moving down to the head, lining up for chow or rolling over for a few more minutes sleep. There were 290 officers and enlisted on board.

A lookout on the *Lackawanna* spotted a tiny wake at 0530. It was a periscope. He reported it to the captain, who responded half asleep, “Keep an eye on it.” The lookout did and followed it as it crossed his ship’s bow. It was headed for the *Mississinewa* that was anchored about 800 yards away. The *kaiten* pilot was focused on a target that filled his periscope view. The 11,000- ton *Mississinewa* was 540 feet in length. The pilot was Sekio Nishina, the inventor of the *kaiten* design and program. He could probably feel concussions from depth charges being dropped by destroyers with frantic abandon. Nishimo lowered the periscope, increased speed, armed the 3,418 pounds of explosives and slammed into the starboard side of *Mississinewa*’s hull. The “Mighty Miss” had taken on 404,000 gallons of aviation gasoline and a full load of Navy Special Fuel Oil the day before. The resulting explosion and fireball were catastrophic. The blast from 100-octane aviation fuel roared across the lagoon and fire completely enveloped the forward section of the ship. Most every ship’s log at Ulithi marked the horrific sight at 0545.

There was a moment of stunned silence on *LCI(G)* 79. Then everyone went to their general quarters or prepared to begin rescue operations. Five of the *LCI(G)* 79 shipmates would join the LCI National Association many years later. They were Edward Akar Jr. S2/c, Ben Baldwin GM3/c,

Edward Grant RM3/c, Edward Mertz MO3/c, and Gayle Oglesby S1/c. Everyone who witnessed the explosion remembered years later, exactly where they were and what they were doing at those first shocking seconds.

**Within minutes a small boat approached *LCI-79*.** The little amphib was one of the nearest ships to the big oiler’s portside. The ship’s gig from AO-59 had injured sailors. Laying on the bottom was steward’s mate Harry Carlson. He was pink. Very little of the black man’s skin remained. He stared up in shock as he was taken on board the LCI. Most who saw him thought he would die. But by 0647 that morning, *LCI 79* had transferred him, and 19 other injured sailors to the hospital ship *Solace* where Carlson and others were saved.

Photo # NH 97981 Sinking of USS *Mississinewa*, 20 November 1944



*Survivors and rescuers watch the USS Mississinewa sink bow first about four hours after being attacked by a manned torpedo sub.*



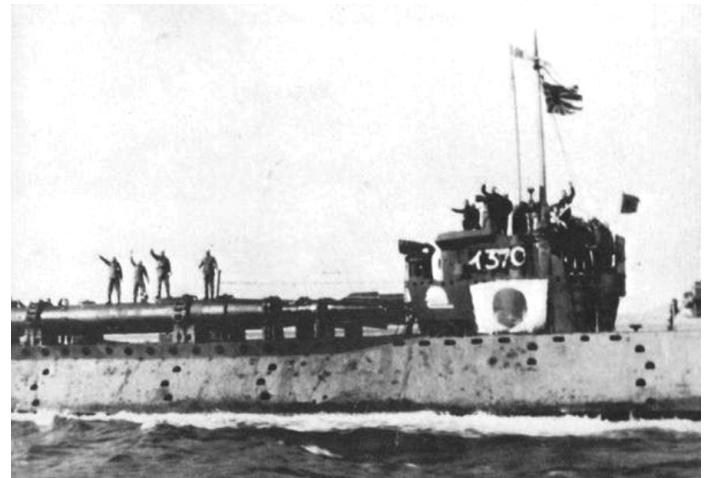
A deckhand spotted a man struggling to reach the LCI. He was Ensign Donald Metcalf. He survived being blown in the water, dodged falling debris, and swam naked to the closest ship. *LCI 79* sailors pulled the exhausted officer from the water as he was about to go under. Small boats from every ship nearby were picking up burned, oil soaked, survivors and transporting them to safety. By 0558 the *LCI 79* had picked up 87 survivors. They had rescued the most survivors of any ship and they were one of the smallest. Their decks and compartments were crowded. The rails were lined with *Mississinewa* sailors drenched in oil and numb to the scene unfolding before them. Their proud ship was covered in fire and smoke that reached over one hundred feet high. The survivors on *LCI 79* watched as shipmates were still abandoning ship. Escape from secondary explosions on the deck and burning oil in the water was deadly. Tears rolled down their cheeks as they witnessed their blackened home roll and begin to sink bow first.

Shock does strange things to a man. Fireman John Mair thought about not having to chip paint in the boiler room anymore. He wondered why that thought came to him while watching the horrors before him and hoping all his buddies had made it off. Bill Brzykey stood nearby in his skivvies and dog tags crying openly. He realized then how attached he had become to the ship in the past six months. The ship and 68 sailors died too young that day.

**At 0830 *LCI 79* got underway** to transport their remaining survivors to *USS Tappahannock* AO-43 and *USS Nantahala* AO-60. The facilities on these ships were

better prepared to care for the needs of these traumatized crewmembers.

For the remainder of the day, all ships were at general quarters. They participated in search and recovery efforts, clean up of debris and the hunt for more intruders. No one knew how many mini subs or fleet subs were attacking Ulithi Atoll. It would be many years later that the complete story was unfolded by Michael Mair the son of *Mississinewa* shipmate John Mair. Exhaustive research and interviews with participants, both Japanese and American, finally completed a story that the Navy had attempted to cover up.



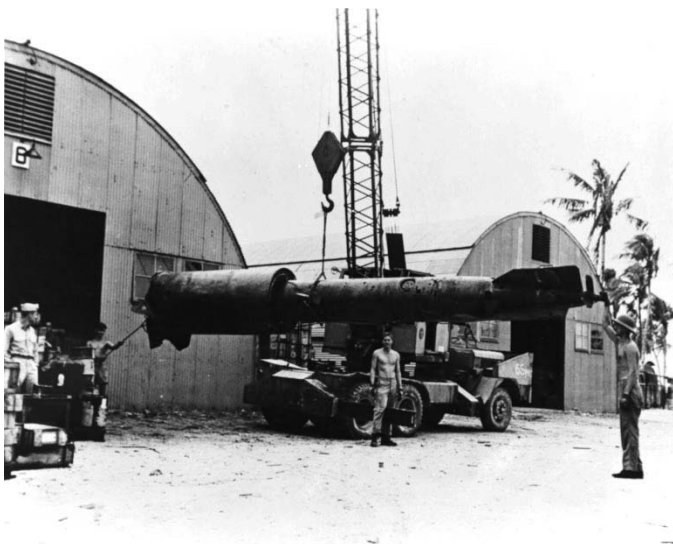
*Japan's I-37 mother submarine with kaiten torpedo subs attached to the hull.*

The *I-37* diversionary attack at Palau never happened. The mother submarine was discovered and sunk by the *USS Conklin*. All hands and all *kaitens* were lost. The *I-36* attack on the northern anchorage at Ulithi was also a failure. Three of the *kaitens* became jammed on the mother subs deck and could not be launched. They were later jettisoned so *I-36* could escape back to Japan. The one *kaiten* that did launch was spotted in the lagoon and sunk with depth charges. Two of *I-47's* *kaitens* missed the

channel entrance and went aground on a coral reef. They most likely self-detonated their warheads. Two separate explosions were witnessed along the reef south of Pugelog Island. The rear section of one of these *kaitens* was found later along the reef. The warhead and pilot's cabin were missing. The mystery surrounding these vessel types continued.

**Three days later a body was found on the northern section of Ulithi Lagoon. LCI 602 recovered the body in Berth 23.**

The badly bloated and decomposed body was only clothed in shorts. The clothing had Japanese characters imprinted and medical personnel identified the body as that of a Japanese male. This was the pilot that had launched from *I-36*. The destroyer escort USS *Rall* (DE-304) and light cruisers USS *Mobile* (CL-63) and USS *Biloxi* (CL-80) had attacked and sunk the *Kaiten* at 0653 on 20 November. Debris from what they thought was a mini two-man sub was also recovered.



*The stern power section of a kaiten recovered on a reef at Ulithi. The cockpit and warhead were blown off when detonated.*

Of the 12 *kaitens*, only pilot Inushu succeeded in his mission. Japan's

exaggerated propaganda reporting announced that three aircraft carriers had been sunk. And so, the failed *kaiten* program would continue and more brave volunteers would die due to false propaganda.

A second attack on Ulithi was planned for January 1945. The *I-36* was ordered back to Ulithi with four more *kaitens*. The torpedo-sub was launched on 12 January 1945. This time an LCI became more a target rather than a witness.

Air patrols, sonar screening and lookouts were more vigilant after the *Mississinewa* sinking. A PBM spotted one of the *kaiten* subs in the lagoon. Four depth charges were dropped, and the sub was sunk. But two other *kaitens* were able to avoid detection and make attacks. The ammunition ship USS *Mazama* (AE-9) was damaged when a *kaiten* prematurely detonated 40 yards from impact. Eight sailors were killed from the blast. The ship was damaged but narrowly escaped a disastrous explosion of stored ammunition.

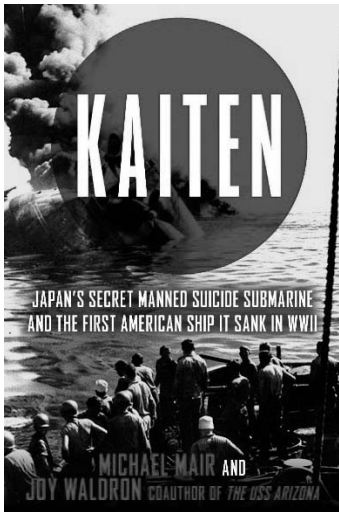
**A smaller LCI(L) 600 became a last-ditch target and took a fatal blow from one of the powerful manned torpedo subs. LCI(L) 600 sank and three of the 28-man crew were killed. The *I-36* made an exaggerated report of four ships being sunk.**

Despite many more *kaiten* attacks during the war, only one other ship was sunk. The USS *Underhill* (DE-682) was attacked by several *kaitens* in the Philippine Sea. *Underhill* destroyed two of them with depth charges and a ramming. A third *kaiten* hit their forward engine room with a catastrophic result. The explosions from the 3,000-pound warhead, in the forward

boilers, and ready ammunition on a 3-inch gun mount split the ship in two. The forward section of the ship went down in minutes with no survivors. *Underhill* lost 112 of their 238-man crew.

Despite the loss of three ships and 191 American sailors, Japan's *kaiten* program was considered a failure. Their goal of crippling America's ability to wage war in the Pacific was never attained. It did succeed in adding another level of *terror* felt by sailors when they saw any movement in the water or plane in the sky. Suicide attackers in torpedo-sub, kamikaze planes, crash boats or human mines were determined to die gloriously. When an aircraft carrier, battleship or troop carrier could not be targeted...a smaller ship – even an LCI – would do.

Resources: "Kaiten: the book by Michael Mair who uncovered the full story of who, what, when, where, why, and how his father's ship

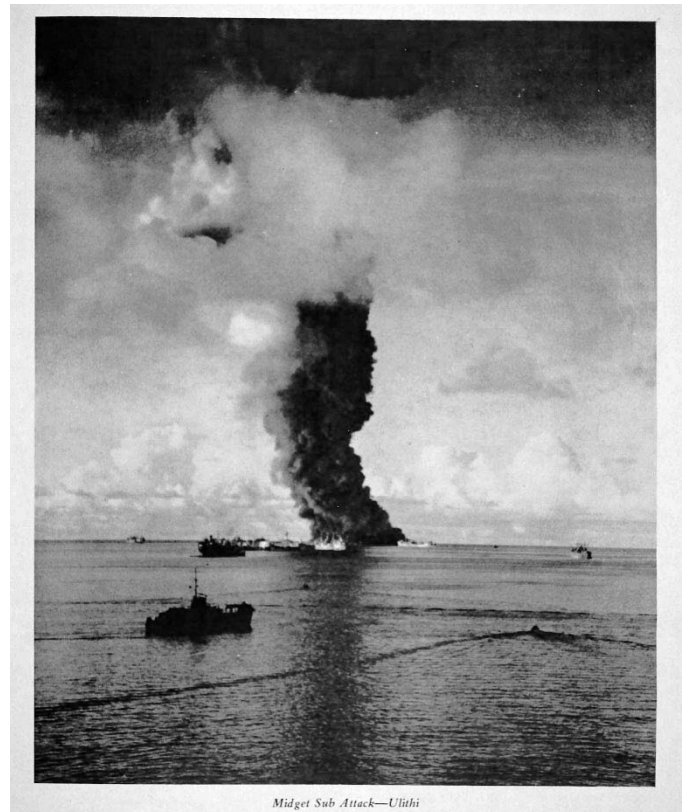


USS *Mississinewa* had been sunk. Also, websites searches, for Navsource, Kaitens, Ulithi, Pacific Wrecks, Kamikaze Images.

*"Kaiten" by Michael Mair was written as a promise to his father. John Mair wouldn't speak about his experience for over 60 years. When he did, he asked his son to tell the story for him and his shipmates.*



*This row of aircraft carriers at Ulithi were the primary targets of the kaiten attacks.*



*Midget Sub Attack—Ulithi*

*An LCI and other ships race toward the burning USS *Mississinewa* at Ulithi.*

# The Forgotten War

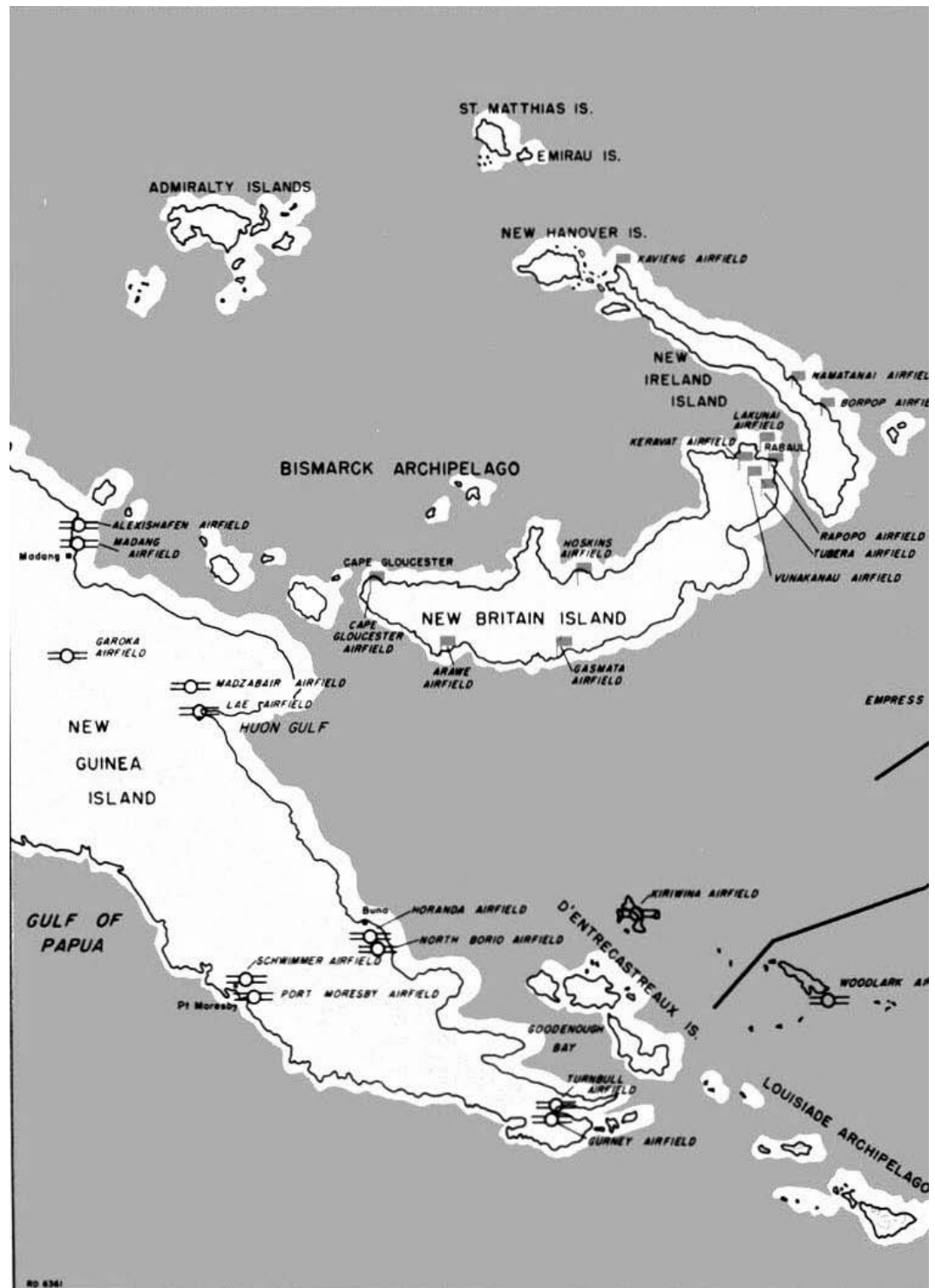
Part 4 by Robert E. Wright Jr.

*"I fear we have awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve"*

Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto

By late September 1943 after a year of costly battles on land, air, and sea The War in the Southwest Pacific, as part of Operation Cartwheel, had progressed half the way up the Solomon Island chain to Vella Lavella (Map on opposite page) and along the coast of New Guinea to the Huon Gulf. The goal was to eliminate the Japanese forces occupying "Fortress Rabaul" on Eastern New Britain Island.

Admiral Yamamoto met his end as the result of that terrible resolve. Long range P-38 fighter planes, operating out of the recently captured air base on Guadalcanal, shot down the plane that he was aboard on its approach to Bougainville.



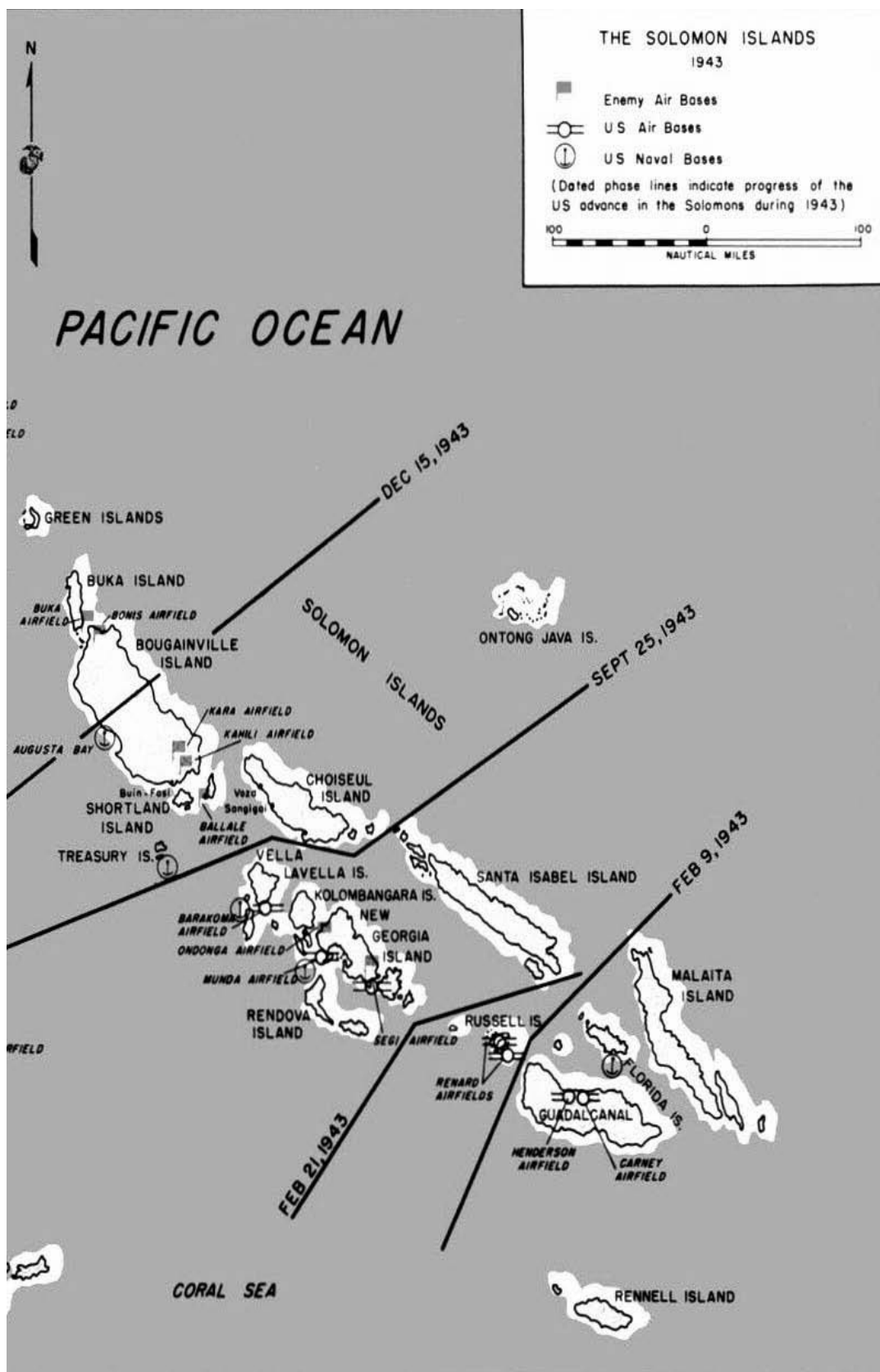


By 1943 the United States was committed to a “Total War Footing,” meaning that every aspect of American economic capability was focused on producing the goods or services

required by the Armed Forces to defeat the Axis Powers. In European Theater, massive forces and mountains of materials were being assembled for the expected assault on

“Fortress Europe” in 1944. The fortunate result, for the Japanese during the first two years of The War with the United States, was that the majority of our “terrible resolve,” had been brought to bear against the forces of Nazi Germany.

From August 1942 to September 1943 the Allied Forces, in the South Pacific and Southwest Pacific Theaters had first stopped any further Japanese conquests. They had scored a major defeat of the Japanese Navy at Midway. After Guadalcanal and with Operation Cartwheel the Allied forces had been pushing the Japanese slowly back towards Tokyo. An operation that a frustrated Admiral Nimitz called, gaining back territory “Inch by inch”.



## **Its Torokina! Now get on your horses**

### **Vice Adm William Halsey**

After numerous staff meetings that evaluated different scenarios that would accomplish the goals of Operation Cartwheel, it was determined that it would be essential for an air base to be established on Bougainville. This was the next step up the Solomon's ladder toward Rabaul. The Japanese planners had come to the same conclusion as to what the next American move would be. Reinforcements (some 37,500 men) from the Japanese 17th Army were sent to Bougainville, and concentrated at Buin, near the island's southern end, and on small islands off the shore of larger island where their major air bases were located. The Japanese surmised after Guadalcanal and Munda that the Americans wanted these bases.

During the recent operations by Americans on New Georgia, it had taken two Marine Raider Battalions with four Army Divisions to root out the approximately 6,000 Japanese defenders. For the Bougainville operation, only one Marine and one Army division were available. With so few men, it would have been impossible to eliminate the Japanese force defending those air bases.

Following the capture of New Georgia, the occupation of Vella Lavella and the construction of an operating airbase with limited casualties, a new "island hopping" strategy was evolving. The Allied planners then began to narrow down suitable locations that would be suitable for building both airfields and a naval base. And they wanted locations that would not be met with an immediate furious ground-based counter-attack. After attending a meeting and

listening to the endless debating among the planners, Halsey, who was never shy about making decisions, stood up and announced, "Its Torokina! Now get on your horses."

Once Halsey's staff had its orders, Operational plans were drawn up. The main landings would be on Bougainville Island's western coast at Point Torokina. Prior to that landing, there would be two separate diversionary landings that they hoped would make the Japanese uncertain as to the actual site of the landing.

### **Diversion 1 on Treasury Islands**

The Treasury Islands, northwest of Vella Lavella was to be the Diversion 1 Landing (covered in Part 3 of our Fall 2022 issue).

This landing resulted in a limited response from the Japanese with numerous air attacks. The operation provided early warning radar sites established to cover the skies between Rabaul and the Cape Torokina landing site on Bougainville. It provided an additional forward air base on Sterling Island for fighter operations. And the Navy established an advanced PT base for PT Boat patrol operations in the Northern Solomons. Those patrols were intended specifically for intercepting Japanese troop and supply movements between Rabaul and their remaining bases in the Solomons.

**Diversion 2 was the Choiseul Island Raid. It launched on 27 October 1943 which was four days prior to the actual landings on Bougainville Island.**

*The 2nd Marine Parachute Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Victor H. Krulak, was allocated to the new operation; It was*

*to be transported to Choiseul on four APD destroyer transports, with an escort of additional destroyers.*

*The Choiseul raid probably had little impact on the wider Bougainville campaign.*

*Although it may not have worked as a diversion, the operation was very successful as a simple raid. The Marines lost 9 dead and 12-15 wounded, while the Japanese lost 143 dead, two barges, 180 tons of supplies and a sizable amount of fuel.*

*Source: Rickard, J (2 August 2013), Operation Blissful - The Choiseul Raid, 27 October-4 November 1943*

*[http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/operation\\_blissful\\_choiseul.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/operation_blissful_choiseul.html)*

The Raider force was delivered by APDs which were destroyers converted to carry both troops and landing craft. These same transports used in this raid were required to deliver the Marines to Cape Torokina. After landing the Marine Raiders, they departed immediately to embark parts of the First Marine Amphibious Corp.

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***Just an ordinary day for men  
of LCI(L) 327***

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When the Raiders felt that they had completed their mission successfully, they radioed that it was now time for their evacuation. The Commander of Task Force 31.1 sent a few LCIs from Flotilla 5 to accomplish the task.

It appears that by this time in the war that this rescue mission was just an ordinary day for men of LCI(L) 327 from the minimal information reported.

**War Diary of LCI(L) 327 4 November 1943**

0118 Beached in the vicinity of Vosa, Choiseul Island

0119 Commenced embarking assigned personnel

0130 Completed embarkation: loaded 212 Marine Paratroopers

0134 Retracted: lying to off harbor entrance  
0210 underway as last ship in column astern of LCI(L)330, LCI(L) 222 unit guide.

The LCI Group 14 commander who was aboard LCI(L) 222 wrote:

**War Diary of LCI(L) Flotilla 5 Group 14, 3 November 1943**

0155 - LCI(L)'s 327 and 330 with LCI(L)222 as guide departed under orders of CTG 31.1 for Voza beach, Choiseul Island to evacuate Marine Paratrooper Btn. surrounded by a superior enemy force. Escorted by 5 PT Boats, LCI(L)s beached successfully at midnight, loaded personnel and withdrew without drawing enemy fire. Disembarked troops at Juno River beach, Vella Lavella I. Troops evacuated as follows: LCI(L) 327 - 212, LCI(L) 330 - 125.

So, this report indicates a slightly more elevated sense of the importance of this mission.

## Bougainville: Land the Landing Force

The landing beaches were chosen from photo reconnaissance. One of the major concerns for the planners of the Cape Torokina landings were the potential Japanese responses to the Task Force

Attack Transports, and using only destroyers for the screening ships. LSTs and LCTs were considered a risk because they were considered so slow, that they would create an unnecessary exposure to Japanese air attacks.



Marines were stranded where they landed because of the swamps beyond the beaches

delivering the first echelon of the First Marine Amphibious Corp. It would be comprised mainly from units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division. They wanted to keep the exposure of the troop transports to Japanese air attacks to a minimum. This would be accomplished by rapid movement of the the assault force in APDs with their supplies in

The other concern was the lack of actual knowledge of the number of the Japanese forces in the landing area, which they estimated at 500. This estimate turned out to be fairly accurate. What they failed to obtain however, was adequate knowledge of the actual conditions that existed on the landing beaches.



## Landing Operations

The task force carrying the assault troops arrived in the transport area on time. The assault wave hit the beaches on schedule with little opposition from the Japanese defenders. That was the end of things going according to plan. The Japanese had left the areas designated as Yellow Beach undefended because the swamp just beyond the narrow beach extends over one mile inland. This same condition existed over most of the other landing beaches except the ones on Point Torokina.

The wave conditions ran high and the beaches were steep. These conditions caused 64 of the 86 LCMs and LCVs to broach on the beach while attempting to land men and

supplies. As the day progressed the landing conditions went from bad to worse. As Halsey reported later, about the beach conditions, they were "worse than anything ever encountered before in the South Pacific." In spite of the difficult conditions encountered, by evening of November 1, 1943 approximately 14,000 Marines were ashore with supplies.

By the second day all the organized opposition from the Japanese forces in the area had ended.

As it turned out, the real enemy on Bougainville was not to be the Japanese, but the jungle.



EQUIPMENT ON THE BEACH EAST OF CAPE TOROKINA.

U S Army Photo 167-2

## Beyond the Beaches for the Marines



There was water and mud behind the beaches...



and more mud moving inland.

Marines fought in mud covered with water (right) ...

and patrolled in the mud and the rain in the jungle of Bougainville (below).



**Ghost Trail a drawing by Kerr Eby 1944**

***"Bougainville had to be the closest thing to a living hell that I ever saw in my life"***

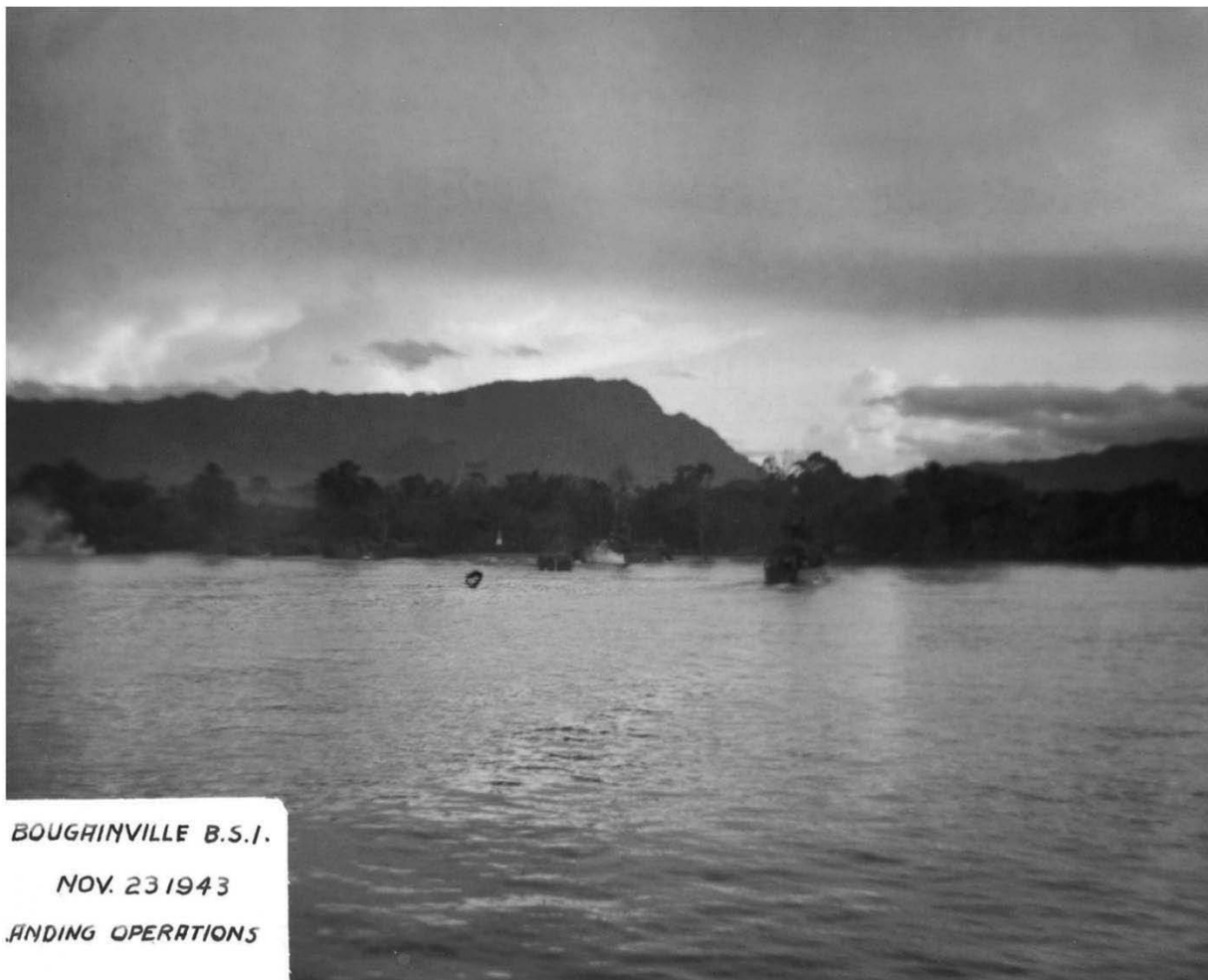
A quote from a Marine after his 28 months overseas

## Land the Naval Construction Battalions



The photo of LCI(L) 61 of Flotilla 5 was taken during the transit from Vella Lavella to Cape Torokina. The Seabees aboard ship are from the 77<sup>th</sup> Naval Construction Battalion.

The objective of the Bougainville Operation was to establish and then defend air bases that would neutralize the threat of the Japanese Forces at Rabaul and the Solomons. Airfields needed to be constructed. And the Seabees built airfields.



The LCIs with the 77<sup>th</sup> NCB approach Cape Torokina.





LCI(L) 63 and LCI(L) 336 in the background with other LCIs are unloaded by the 77<sup>th</sup> NCB at Cape Torokina (above and below).





Seabees successfully constructed the Cape Torokina Air Base on the West coast of Bougainville Island in the Northern Solomon Islands which was the goal of the military.

*Once the ground forces of the Third Marines stretched beyond reach of our helping hands and had no further need for us, we went right to work providing airstrips which would guarantee them air support. As our part in the assault stage ceased, we began construction of three airfields. Two measured 200 feet by 4,000 feet. These were the fighter strips. The other, a bomber strip, covered 1,500,000 square feet-250 by 6,000- of soggy swampland. All three airfields were situated in dense jungle. After the 40 sweat-filled days required to complete these projects, the Bougainville jungle exhibited three long, green-edged scars, surfaced neatly with tons of steel Marston Mat.*

*This was not all the work being done at the time by the Bees. Another 40 days saw the completion of 3.8 miles of 40-foot roadway. Laboriously dredged out of the middle of "impassable" swamp.*

53 NCB CruiseBook

The 77<sup>th</sup> Naval Construction Battalion was not the only Seabee unit sent to Bougainville. In addition to the 77<sup>th</sup> (featured in the photos) the 25<sup>th</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, 53<sup>rd</sup>, and 71st NCBs took only weeks to perform the impossible feat of the building the naval base and three airfields that Halsey had ordered.



This B-24 Bomber takes off from a newly constructed Bougainville airfield (above), and closer view of the fighter airfield on Cape Torokina (below).



# The Navy invades the wilds of Idaho

*By Dennis J. Hahn*

My dad, Kenneth J. Hahn, served in the U.S. Navy during WWII. When asked many years after the end of WWII how he ended up in the Navy, he said, “I did not enlist. I was drafted in July 1943 and sent to Jefferson Barracks for my physical. After I passed my Army physical, the last examiner asked me if I would rather go into the Navy or Marines because they could not get enough for those services through enlistments (they did not draft for these services). After I chose to serve in the Navy, they put me in a hotel in St. Louis for the night and the next day I had to go to the Federal Building for a Navy physical.”

“I passed the Navy physical; but if I had not, I would have had to go to the Army,” my dad explained. “You’d have thought you would need to be in better physical shape for the Army, but I guess they needed the best on the water.”

“Your mom was not happy about me going into the Navy because she was just sure I would be on a ship that would be sunk, and I would drown,” Hahn told his son. “Well, it turned out she was glad later that I was not a soldier.” My mother was a “Rosie the Riveter” at Curtiss-Wright in St. Louis while my dad was in the Navy. (I was eight months old when my dad was drafted.)

Upon arrival at the receiving building, recruits were greeted with physical and psychological examinations, inoculations



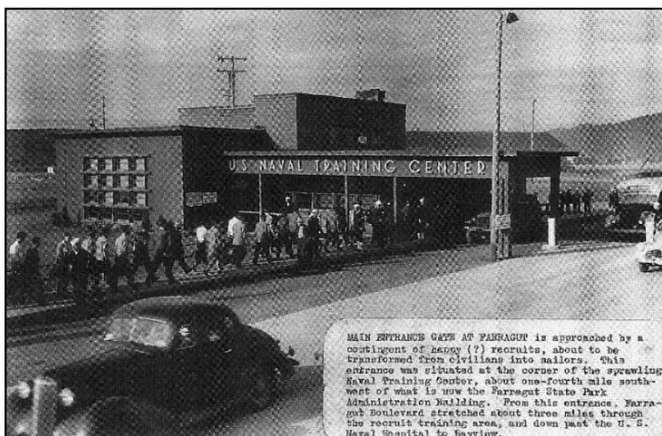
that resulted in fever and chills, and dental examinations. They received three shots the first day and four additional shots over the first three weeks. They received a haircut that took their hair down to the skin. They were issued Navy clothing and personal items and a bag to send home their civilian clothes and personal items. They were issued a mattress, a sheet, a pillow and pillowcase, and a blanket. In total they received 51 items. With their 51 items, they were bussed to their training camp. For the first three-weeks they were restricted (quarantined) to the base. After the first three weeks, they were permitted to go to the USO in either Sandpoint or Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

When Germany started the war in Europe in 1939, the U.S. Navy had about 110,000 personnel. The Navy started to increase their strength in 1939 and by the time of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Navy had enlarged the four existing Naval training

stations at Newport, RI; Great Lakes, IL; Norfolk, VA; and San Diego, CA and had 290,000 personnel. By July 1944 the Navy had 3,000,000 personnel.

For a long time, I wondered why would they have Naval training in Idaho? In late 1941 it was decided that additional training capacity was needed, and approval was given to construct three additional Naval training stations. The new training stations needed to be built away from the west coast due to the fear of a Japanese attack. Additionally, they needed to be constructed away from other Naval training stations, located by a large body of water that could accommodate a fleet of small watercraft, have railroad and highway connections, and locate by a city large enough to serve as a liberty site.

The three sites selected to be Naval training stations were Bainbridge Naval Training Station near Port Deposit, Maryland; Sampson Naval Training Station near Geneva, New York; and Farragut Naval Training Station near Sandpoint and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.



The Idaho location was selected due to the depth of Lake Pend Oreille. The lake is about 1,150 feet deep and is at an elevation of 2,050 feet above sea level. The site is in

northern Idaho in the Bitterroot Mountains about 30 miles from Coeur d'Alene and about 28 miles from Sandpoint.

From late 1941 to March 1942, the federal government acquired 4,160 acres by Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho from private landowners, Kootenai County, and a railway company to construct a new Naval training station. This was considered an isolated location. A \$58,000,000 construction contract was awarded to the Walter Butler Company of St. Paul, Minnesota to build seven training camps for 5,000 men each.

This included administration buildings, a chapel, a special recreation building, a post office, a brig, barracks, water towers, a water training area at the lake, a housing area for 300 families, recreation buildings, gymnasium, basketball courts, a drill hall, boxing ring, a cafeteria style mess hall, two medical dispensaries, laundry buildings, hospital, gun range, and a pool for training. Many had to be taught to swim. Training of 30,000 sailors could take place at the same time.

On May 30, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt named the training station in honor of the famous Civil War Admiral David Glasgow Farragut. It was Admiral Farragut who said during the raid of Mobile Bay, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead." By the first of June 1942, 7,000 workers were on site, using green lumber cut on site to construct buildings. From April to September more than 22,000 men worked 10-hour shifts for 13 of every 14 days constructing 776 buildings. In the great hurry and with a supply crunch, many of the buildings were constructed with green



wood. The green wood caused problems in later years.

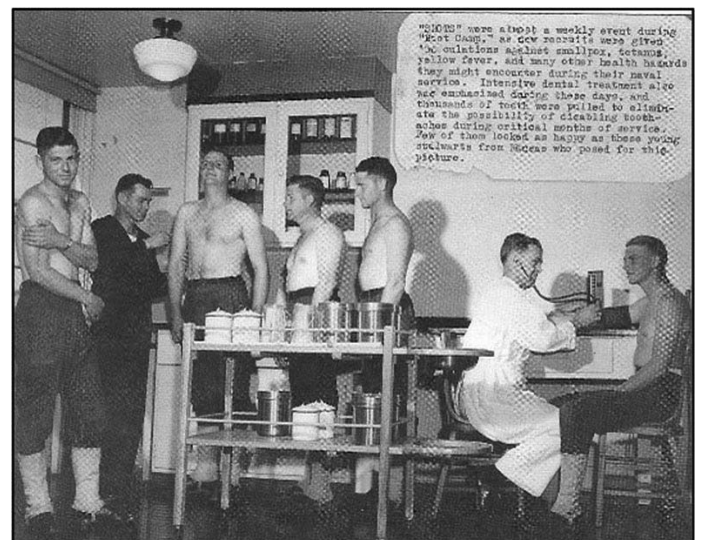


*Kenneth Hahn graduated from Farragut Training Center on September 1, 1943.*

Many men from the Midwest were sent for Navy basic training to the Farragut Naval Training Station during WWII. During 1942-1945, it was the second-largest naval training station next to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station near Chicago. The motto of Farragut Naval Training Station was "Where Fightin' Blue Jackets Were Made!"

By the end of WWII, Farragut Naval Training Station trained 293,381 recruits and over 25,000 service school attendees; and housed over 1,000 prisoners-of-war. The last recruits graduated in March 1945. The training station was decommissioned in June 1946. From 1946-1949 it was the site of

Farragut College and Technical Institute. It ceased operation in the summer of 1949 due to decreased enrollment and financial difficulties. In 1950 3,854 acres were transferred to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and became Farragut Wildlife Management Area. This eventually became Farragut State Park. The Navy still has a presence at Lake Pend Oreille with its Acoustic Research Detachment of the Carderock Division of the Naval Surface Warfare Center



*Recruits line up for their series of shots at Farragut Naval Training Center.*



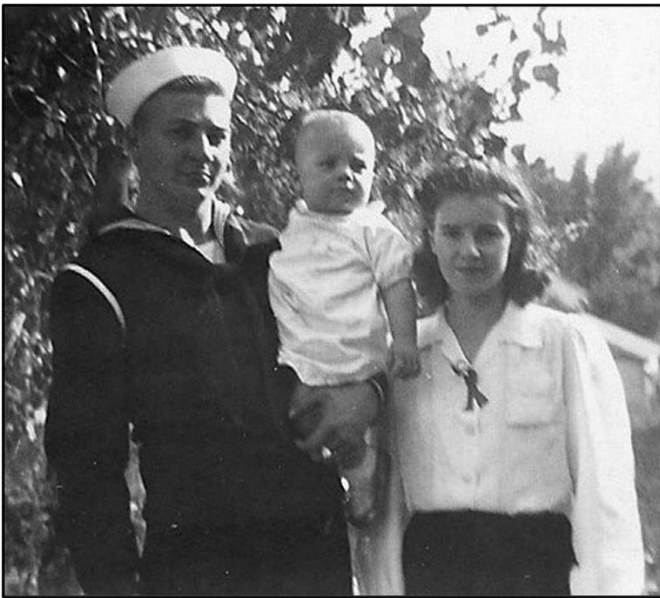
*Recruits are taught the uses and types of knots needed for handling lines on board ship.*



# A St. Charles Sailor during WWII – Kenneth J. Hahn

*by Dennis J. Hahn and Cary J. Hahn  
(Sons of Kenneth & Darlene Hahn)*

Kenneth J. Hahn was born on March 16, 1925, and grew up in St. Charles, Missouri. He married his high school sweetheart, Darlene M. Rowe. She was a “Rosie the Riveter” at Curtiss-Wright aircraft factory in St. Louis during WWII. He worked as an acetylene welder. Kenneth and Darlene had a son Dennis before he was drafted in July 1943.



*Kenneth Hahn with son Dennis and wife Darlene while home on leave after boot camp.*

After completing training at Farragut Naval Training School (NTS) on September 1, 1943, Kenneth was given two weeks leave. A train took him home to St. Charles to see his wife and son, and other family members.

He returned to Farragut NTS from leave by train and two weeks later was assigned to the U. S. Naval Amphibious Training Base (USNATB) Solomons, Maryland. He

traveled back east by train, his fourth train trip in four months. After six months of amphib training, he requested to be assigned to a crew assembled for a new ship when commissioned. That ship would be the “Landing Craft Infantry” (LCI). During WWII, 923 LCIs were built by ten shipyards for both the Pacific and Atlantic theaters. Kenneth was assigned to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater as part of the crew of *LCI(L)-754*.

There were several classes of LCI seagoing amphibious assault ships used to land large numbers of infantry directly onto beaches and to provide other support measures. LCIs were called crafts instead of ships because they were under 200 feet long. They did not share the limelight with battleships, aircraft carriers and destroyers. LCIs had two nicknames – “The Waterbug Navy” and “Lousy Crate Indeeds”. Sailors manning the craft referred to them as “Elsie Item” representing “LC” and “Item” being the phonetic alphabet word for “I”.

LCIs weren’t originally designed for crossing the ocean but did so due to the urgency of WWII. They were designed with a flat bottom for beach landings and close support. The LCIs proved seaworthy but provided young sailors a rough ride on the open seas. They could operate up to 14 knots or 16.111 miles per hour. LCIs and the men who served on them did the work of bringing invasion troops right to the fighting, laying smoke to hide larger ships from attack, and providing close-in fire support using machine guns, rockets, and mortars. The LCI Class crafts were not given names and were known only by their number designation. The LCIs were pretty basic. They did not have things like a movie

projector or laundry. The LCIs had a 20 cubic foot chest freezer, a four-burner stove, a mess table, a 23x20 foot berthing compartment with bunks stacked three high, and a small oil stove in the corner of the berthing compartment for heat. It was stark – no frills. The crew's normal duties included cleaning, maintenance, repairs, painting, and other deck duties. Crew members were assigned battle-stations for invasions and when under attack.

*LCI(L)-754* was commissioned as Landing Craft, Infantry (Large)]. It was converted to Landing Craft, Infantry (Gunboat) *LCI(G)-754* and later to Landing Craft, Infantry (Mortar) *LCI(M)-754*. Each version had its own type of mission. It served in battles as *LCI(M)-754*.



*LCI(M) 754 passes under Golden Gate Bridge.*

The crew for *LCI(L)-754* was assembled at USNATB in March of 1944 with three officers and twenty-five enlisted men. Lt.(jg) Lloyd A. West was assigned as Commander of the craft during the entire war. Before leaving USNATB to join *LCI(L)-754*, Hahn and the crew underwent a two-week training school and then a two-week LCI cruise on the Atlantic Ocean. They practiced beach landings on Virginia Beach, Virginia at the Amphibious Training

Base. The Amphibious Training Base (also known as "Little Creek") was the center for all types of amphibious training and the training of ship's crews. On April 17, 1944, they went by train to Portland, Oregon to await the commissioning of the new *LCI(L)-754* being produced by the Commercial Iron Works shipbuilding facility. Their ship was commissioned on 4 May 1944 and sailed on May 13<sup>th</sup> down the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean to San Diego, California. At San Diego, *LCI(L)-754* was converted to *LCI(G)-754*. Hahn's wife, Darlene, traveled by train to San Diego to spend the last week of June 1944 with her husband before he shipped out. They would not see each other again until December 14, 1945.

On 4 July 1944 *LCI(G)-754* sailed for Pearl Harbor. Being a Motor Machinist Mate, Hahn worked below deck and did not see any of Hawaii as they approached the islands. Upon arrival he said that "When I emerged from the engine room, all I saw was a bunch of tall weeds where we moored. Later I did see the real Hawaii." At Pearl Harbor *LCI(G)-754* was placed in dry dock to have U.S. Army 4.5-inch mortars installed converting it to *LCI(M)-754*. Twenty-five enlisted men and a First Lieutenant with the U.S. Army 98<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division were added to the LCI crew to man the mortars for the first two Philippines invasions. After the Philippines invasions of Leyte and Luzon, the Army personnel were replaced with sailors. *LCI(M)-754* was assigned to be a part of LCI Flotilla 6.

One day while walking at the Pearl Harbor Naval Base with some sailor friends, they saw some Marines in their dress blues standing at parade rest with rifles about 10 feet apart on both sides of the streets and intersections. Everyone on foot had to stop

until a motorcade passed. They saw President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the motorcade. Hahn commented that “President Roosevelt was riding in his open top limo with his upturned hat, cigarette. and holder like you see him portrayed.” He found out later that President Roosevelt was there to meet with General Douglas McArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz who were planning strategy for the invasion of Japan.

While at Hawaii, Hahn and some shipmates decided to get tattoos on their arms. Asked years later why he did it, he said that they didn’t think they would live through the war and “why not”. It was done as a lark. Hahn regretted getting tattoos the rest of his life. For years he would not wear a short sleeve shirt because of the tattoos.

On 4 October 1944 they arrived at Manus, Admiralty Islands to prepare for the invasion of Leyte. At daylight on 20 October 1944, they were attacked from the air by Japanese Zeros. Hahn said, “This was the first air raid we had seen, and we were scared stiff”. They approached to 2,000 yards of the invasion beach and started “Giving the Japs hell with our mortars.” This was the first time Army weapons were fired from a Navy vessel. “We did a bang-up job of tearing up things with our shells.” For three days they laid smoke during the air raids. The LCIs left on October 24<sup>th</sup> and headed for Hollandia, New Guinea. Hahn said, “This is the hottest place I’ve ever been. You break-out in a sweat even sitting in the shade.”

On 7 November 1944 they arrived at a small island in the New Guinea group for repairs. Here on November 28<sup>th</sup>, they picked up 100 soldiers to put on other LCI(M)’s

and went back to Manus, Admiralty Islands arriving on December 7<sup>th</sup> – exactly three years after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

On Christmas Day 1944, *LCI(M)-754* was at the Admiralty Islands just north of Australia – right before the Luzon invasion. Since large ships had a Christmas dinner and entertainment, the crews of smaller ships were invited to join them. Hahn remembers his crew was invited to the *Kitkin Bay* aircraft carrier; and when the entertainment was about to start, he thought the sailor to his left looked familiar and asked him if his name was Robert Billing, and he was. Hahn had not seen him since their freshman year at St. Peter Catholic School.

On 6 January 1945 (two days before reaching Luzon) the LCI(M) flotilla was attacked by three Japanese Zeros. They strafed and bombed but missed all the LCI(M)’s. Hahn’s gun crew shot down one of the three Zeros. They arrived at Lingayen Gulf on northwestern Luzon in the Philippines on January 9<sup>th</sup>. At dawn they were attacked from the air. About 0830 *LCI(M)-754* was circling a light cruiser no more than 100 yards away when a Japanese Zero Kamikaze crash dived between the twin smokestacks of the cruiser. It burst into tremendous flames killing several sailors and soldiers. This was the first (but not the last) Kamikaze suicide attack the crew of *LCI(M)-754* witnessed. Hahn said it was “horrifying!” He also said, “We never felt safe anymore.” All that night they were attacked by suicide boats and human torpedo suicide swimmers. On January 10<sup>th</sup> *LCI(L)-974* was sunk by a human torpedo swimmer killing several sailors and soldiers. From January 9<sup>th</sup> to January 18<sup>th</sup>, they were attacked from the air each morning and each

evening until departing Luzon and heading to Leyte.

They finally escaped Leyte for Saipan and arrived there on February 10th. Mail caught up with them at Saipan after going 54 days without mail. Hahn received eighty letters – almost all of them from his wife Darlene. On February 15<sup>th</sup> they departed for Iwo Jima. The day before arriving at Iwo Jima they broke down and had to be towed by a sea-going tugboat to Iwo Jima. On February 17<sup>th</sup>, two days prior to the invasion of Iwo Jima, 12 LCI(G)s of Flotilla 8 were assigned to protect Underwater Demolition Team (UDT). They provided rocket and gunfire during the UDT insertion and beach mapping reconnaissance. The flotilla was mistaken by the Japanese defenders as the main invasion and were fired upon by numerous previously hidden large caliber coastal defense artillery (up to 8 inch). All 12 LCIs were damaged, one was sunk, and there were over 200 casualties. The LCIs completed their mission and exposed hidden Japanese defenses.



*LCI(M)s firing their 4.5-inch mortars.*

The LCI(M)'s of Flotilla 6 provided mortar bombardment on these hidden defenses for the next 10 days. While at Iwo Jima, air raids by the Japanese were scarce which surprised the LCI crews since they were only 700 miles from Japan.

On 26 February 1945 *LCI(M)-754* departed for Saipan. They stayed three weeks getting their engines overhauled. They then departed for another invasion at Okinawa. On April 1, Easter Sunday, the invasion began. *LCI(M)-754* was one of 42 LCI(M)'s employed to support the initial landing on Okinawa along with LCI rocket ships and gunboats. Their LCI flotilla was included in a convoy used as a decoy invasion group at a beachhead to see if they could draw away some of the Japanese from the actual invasion site. The mortar gunboats were effective in providing close-in bombardment of coastal positions. After the troop landing, they made smoke screens. Flotilla 8 spent 75 days at Okinawa.

Early one morning during the battle at Okinawa, *LCI(M)-754* crew saw a blinking light in the water. The light was blinking S-O-S. They circled it a couple times and approached with caution. They saw it was someone in the water but were concerned that it could be a Japanese suicide bomber. They finally were able to determine it was a U.S. Marine pilot. He explained to them that he shot down a Japanese bomber and followed it down to make sure it didn't get away and got too close to the water and crashed into the sea. Fortunately, he was not injured.

On 14 June 1945, they left Okinawa and arrived at Saipan on June 21<sup>st</sup> where they stayed for two days to refuel and take on fresh food. On June 23<sup>rd</sup> they departed for Pearl Harbor for major repairs and rest. They had gone 10 months without liberty. Hahn said, "It was a great feeling to get back to where there was civilization once more." However, they would soon be departing for Japan for another invasion. As it turned out, the United States detonated two nuclear

weapons over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. The surrender of Japan was announced by Japanese Emperor Hirohito on August 15<sup>th</sup> to the Japanese people, and the surrender was signed on the USS *Missouri* September 2<sup>nd</sup>.



*Dennis Hahn holds up a big news headline.*

Of the 928 LCIs built, only 21 (2.3%) were sunk from enemy action. Many were damaged from being shot-up by aircraft and land-based weapons, bombed, torpedoed, and struck by underwater mines.

The Navy had a point system for discharge from active duty and if you qualified, they would ship you back to the United States for discharge. Hahn had the points, but the chief motor machinist mate was 14 years older and got to leave first. Hahn was the only first-class motor machinist mate on the LCI. He was made acting chief until his replacement from the States arrived. In the meantime, *LCI(M)*-

754 was ordered to go to the Marshall Islands. About a week after getting to Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands, Hahn's replacement arrived. He was then placed in charge of a twenty-man detail heading back to the United States. They were placed on the USS *Prince Williams* (a baby flattop aircraft carrier) and arrived in San Diego, California on December 6, 1945. He was bused to Camp Pendleton where he stayed for a few days and then made his last Navy train trip to St. Louis. He was discharged from active duty at the U.S. Naval Air Station at Lambert Field, St. Louis, Missouri on December 14, 1945. His rank at discharge was Motor Machinist Mate, 1<sup>st</sup> Class (MoMM1c). He was home!

Hahn went to work for the railroad after coming home from the Navy. In 1948 he went to work at the Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant in Hazelwood, Missouri. The plant manufactured various models of Mercury and Ford vehicles. He started as a union employee and ended as a salaried employee. In the late 1960's he transferred from the assembly plant to the Lincoln-Mercury Sales Office located in Westport, Maryland Heights. Due to a heart condition, he took a medical retirement in 1982 at age of 57.

Hahn died of a heart attack at age 81 on June 29, 2006. Darlene died at age 84 of heart failure and Alzheimer's on April 27, 2009. They are survived by four sons, Dennis, Cary, Jeffrey and Wesley.

# LCI shipmate awarded France's Legion of Honor

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

"More than 70 years ago, Mr. Vernon Lingle risked his life for the freedom of France and Europe. France is a free and sovereign country, thanks to the bravery of such veterans and thanks to the United States of America." This was the message from French diplomat, Anne -Laure Desjonquieres during an award ceremony in 2022.

Lingle, a gunner's mate on the *LCI(L) 490* landed troops on Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasion of Normandy. Now 96 years old, Lingle was being recognized by the French government for his service to their country. The Legion of Honor is France's highest honor.

The medal is bestowed on French citizens, as well as foreign nationals who risked their lives during World War II while fighting on French soil. The award is officially known as the National Order of the Legion of Honor. It was established in 1802 by Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

Lingle and the crew of *LCI(L) 490* left for England on Christmas Day 1943. They spent the next several months on training exercises. On D-Day *LCI 490* led a column of LCIs to Easy Red Omaha Beach. A letter sent home by a shipmate described their day.

*"We were supposed to hit the beach at 1030 in the morning, but due to the confusion and crowding of so many ships we were told not to beach for a while. At*



Vernon Lingle of North Carolina received the Legion of Honor Award from France.

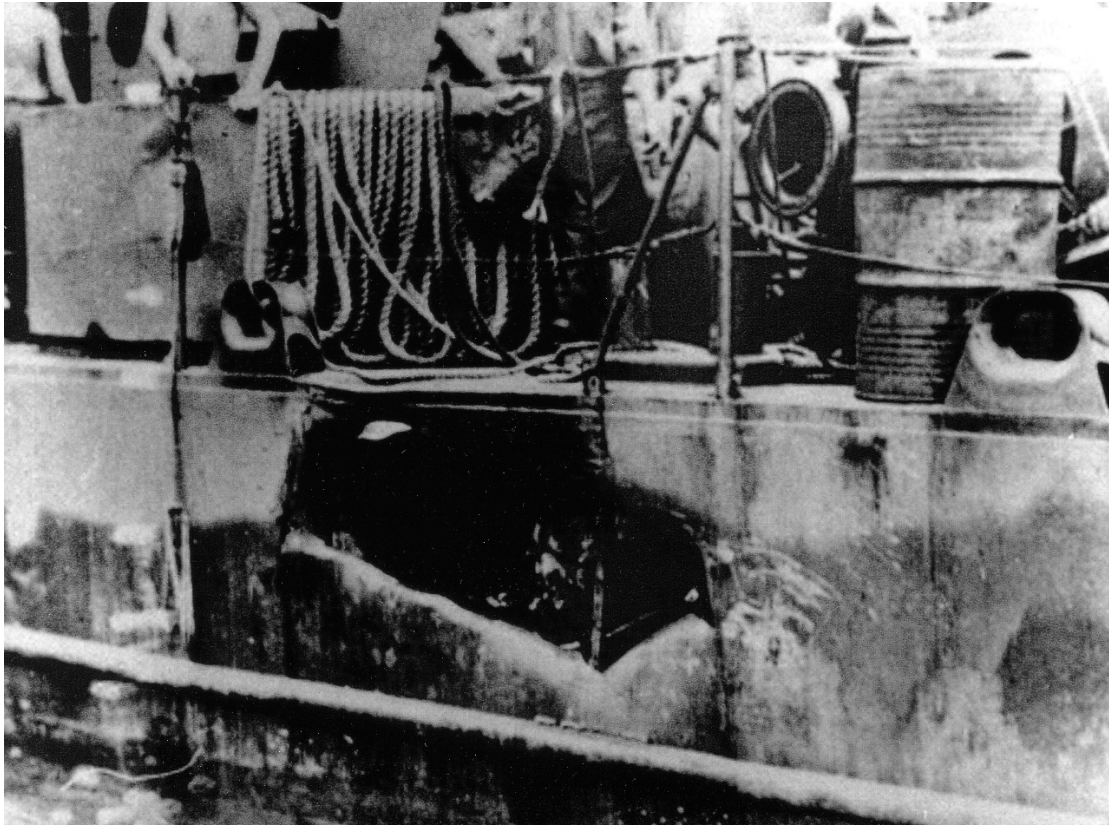
*about 1330 our wave made another attempt to go in. Not all the ships in our wave could hit the beach at the same time because of the obstacles the Germans had placed in the water. All this time machine gun bullets were flying, also mortar shells were whistling over our heads. We finally saw a hole where we could go in, but another ship slid in front of us. Boom, bang, she hit three mines. That was one of the many narrow escapes we had. At last, it was decided to unload our troops on LCM's."*

The French diplomat told Lingle that he embodies the French-American courage, friendship and values that bind the two nations together.





## The Story of the USS LCI(G)-70 is Memorialized in US Navy History



*Damage to the hull of USS LCI(G) 70 where a Japanese torpedo struck the ship.*

Combat Narratives  
Solomon Islands Campaign:  
Volume XIII  
**Bougainville Operations  
and the  
Battle of Cape St. George**

3-25 November 1943  
Office of Naval Intelligence, U.S. Navy

**TORPEDO ATTACK ON SMALL CRAFT,  
5 NOVEMBER 1943**

On the afternoon of 5 November, *PT 167* and *LCI(L) 70* left Cape Torokina escorting *LCT 68* to the Treasury Islands. By 1915 the little convoy, sailing on course 205°T., speed seven knots, had reached a position 28 miles southwest of Torokina. The torpedo boat was about 150 yards ahead and the

same distance to the port of the LCI, with the LCT nearly 700 yards astern. The sun had set, and it was quite dark in the east with only a little light remaining in the west. The ships were at Condition 2.

Suddenly a flight of twelve planes flying at an altitude of about 200 feet was sighted almost upon the convoy. The enemy formation, consisting of Kate type torpedo planes, split into two groups, eight planes swerving to the right and passing ahead and four boring in directly to attack. The leading plane dived at the PT boat, released a torpedo, and continued directly at the boat, which had opened fire upon it. As the Kate passed over the PT its wing caught on her radio antenna. The plane wobbled a few times and then crashed into the sea. A severe shock felt aboard the PT at the time was later discovered to have been caused by a

torpedo entering the boat ten feet abaft her stem and about six feet beneath her deck and passing completely through the boat and out the opposite side without exploding. Holes about six feet by two, with their major axis horizontal, were ripped out of both sides of the boat's hull. Pieces of the torpedo's fin and one of its horizontal rudders were left aboard the PT.

When a second group of planes came in to attack from the west, the PT opened fire again. The 20 mm. gunner on her fantail saw his shots go home into one of the planes, which promptly burst into flames and crashed into the sea so close to the port quarter that men on the stern were drenched by the splash. One man saw a torpedo track cross under the PT's fantail and disappear to the port.

*LCI(L) 70* opened fire on the first enemy group with her 40-mm. gun as soon as the exhaust of the planes could be seen with glasses, and then with her 20-mm. and .50 caliber guns at a range of approximately 2,000 yards. The first plane to make a run on the LCI was blazing when she passed over the ship from the port and was finished off by the starboard guns, crashing into the water about 2,500 yards to the starboard. A second plane was shot down about one minute later.

At 1920, two planes came in together, one bearing 230°, the other 260°. Both of these planes were hit, the first bursting into flames and crashing into the sea close on the starboard quarter, while the second continued its flight. The shot down pilot dropped his torpedo which struck the ship between frames 91 and 96 at an angle of 45°. The projectile continued into the ship, passing through compartment C-306-A, the bulkheads at frames 91 and 81, and entered the engine room directly above the control

desk, skidding over the starboard quad of engines and coming to rest on the catwalk beside the starboard quad on the outboard side. The warhead became dislodged in the process and came to rest in compartment 4. Five minutes later the last plane came in bearing 270°, and all guns opened fire. The plane crashed into the sea about 5,000 yards off the starboard side of the ship.

After the action it was discovered that there was a hot Japanese torpedo in the engine room, where a minor fire had been started. One man was wounded fatally and another seriously. The fire was quickly extinguished, but it seems that the torpedo continued to run, setting up a dense acid smoke that made survey of damage difficult. All rudder controls had been carried away, and the ship was dead in the water. Orders were given to abandon ship. All personnel including the two casualties were transferred to the damaged PT.

*LCT 68*, was about a mile off, and had escaped attack entirely. She agreed to undertake to tow the damaged LCI, and a volunteer work party of two officers and eight men were transferred back aboard the LCI to secure a tow line. Leaving the volunteer crew aboard the LCT, the torpedo boat returned with the remaining survivors to Cape Torokina, arriving there at 2400. *LCT 68* with the crippled LCI in tow arrived off Cape Torokina the following morning at 0845. A bomb disposal unit went aboard and soon disarmed the torpedo.

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Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060  
[www.history.navy.mil](http://www.history.navy.mil)

The LCI(L) 70 was awarded the Presidential Unit For the above action, prior to be reclassified USS LCI(G) 70

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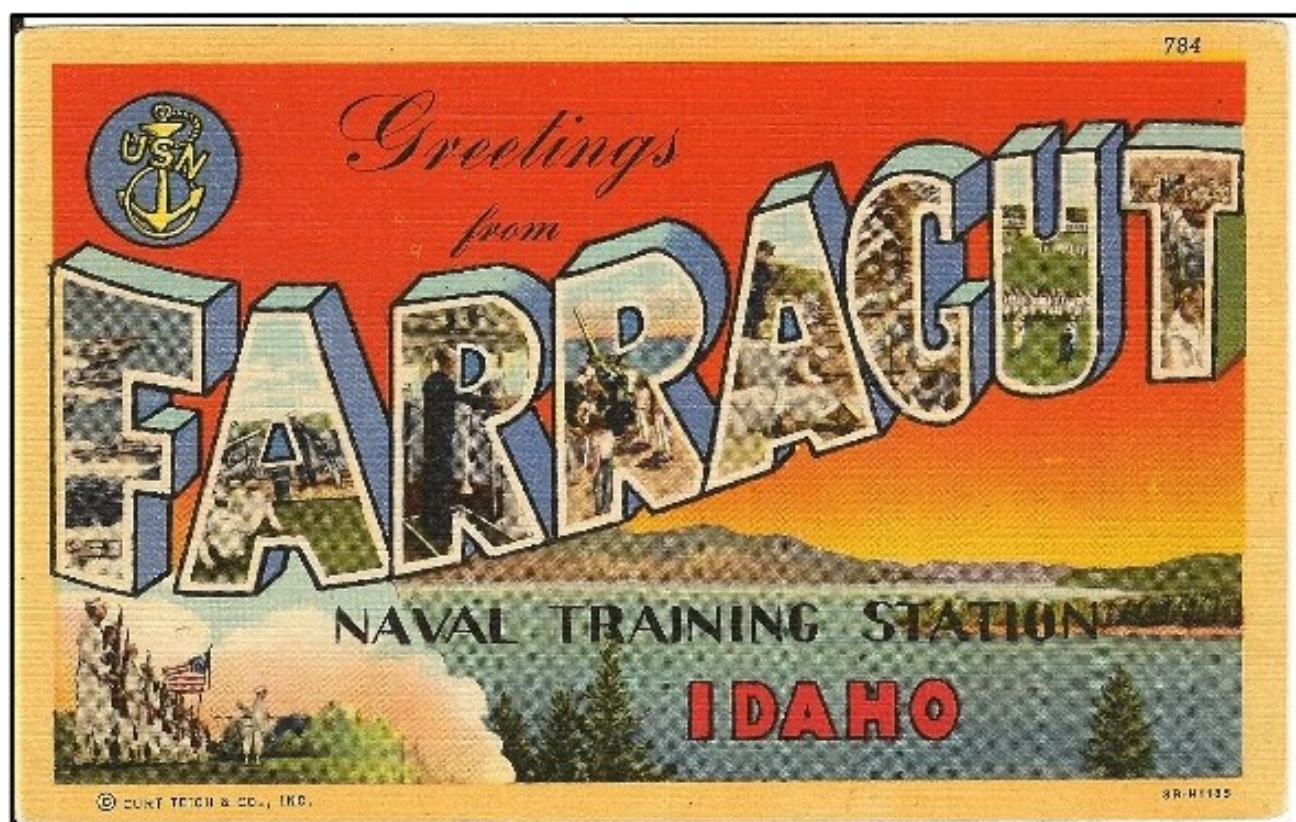
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**Attention LCI Veterans and Associates**  
**We need your stories now. Write or email John France.**

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

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**Farragut Naval Training Center Postcard:** The Navy chose this location in Idaho to build a training facility during WWII due to its remote location. The distance from the coast eliminated any chance of coastal attack. The lake provided small boat training and recreation. See story inside.