

Joint Issue of

# ELSIE ITEM

and the

# DECK LOG OF THE USS LCI(L) 713



Official Newsletters of the USS LCI National Association and  
The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum

ISSUE 103

DECEMBER 2018



### Inside this issue...

- LCI-713 restoration updates
- Reunion notice – Portland 2019
- Recalling Iwo Jima on LCI-471
- LCIs rescue at Battle of Samar

## “Deck Log of the USS LCI(L) 713”

**December 2018**

This is the official publication of the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum (AFMM), an Oregon based non-profit charitable organization. Membership is open to anyone interested in supporting our mission.

*Membership information* (See form on page 5) or for online memberships or donations, check our website.

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Phone: 541-226-5427

Thanks to our volunteer contributors:

Rich Lovell, J Wandres, and Dave McKay.

**2019 LCI National Reunion May 3-5 at the Portland Sheraton. Hosted by the AFMM.**

*Cover: LCI-337 instrumental in the rescue at Samar. See page 22.*

## “The Elsie Item”

**Number 103 December 2018**

The Official publication of the USS LCI National Association, a non-profit veteran's organization. Membership in the USS LCI National Association is open to the US Navy or Coast Guard Veterans who served aboard a Landing Craft Infantry, or to anyone related to an LCI Veteran, or to anyone interested in the history of LCIs. Any material for possible publication should be sent to Jeff Veesenmeyer (see addresses below).

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

[www.usslci.org/share-your-story](http://www.usslci.org/share-your-story).

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Facebook for the LSI 1091 Museum: <https://www.facebook.com/USSLIL1091/>

## **Message from Rick Holmes, President Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum**

Welcome to our second collaboration with the USS LCI National Association! We hope you all enjoy the expanded content that this allows. If you have been following us on Facebook, you'll know that we have had another very productive restoration effort this year, thanks to our fabulous AFMM crew. And thanks to all of you that have help with the funding for our efforts.

You'll find a general plan for our hull repair in the LCI-713 update article. The good news is that we are starting to receive some funding from public sources. We received a \$2,000 grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust to help with fundraising. Thanks to the Kinsman Foundation, we have an extra \$4,500 to do a hull survey. The survey will start this month and is critical to moving forward with the repair.

You'll also read an excellent article on the Artisan drydock sections by J. Wandres. The drydock sections are located next door to the LCI-713 in the Vigor Industrial shipyard and it is our hope that these may be a final solution for our repair.

I personally want to bring your attention to the feature article on page 8 about Phil Reed, the remarkable U.S. Navy "MotorMac" and how he has helped us over the years. Phil recently passed away and will be missed by us all.

***Your continuing support is crucial to our success.*** With your help, we will save the LCI-713 for future generations. Our donation form is on the next page.

We wish you all fair winds and following seas!

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## **Message from Robert Wright, President USS LCI National Association**

I am writing this on Veterans Day 2018. The media always seems to discover a few of the last living veterans of WWII and features interviews about their experiences during the war. The one common thread in all the responses, is their "Pride in Serving their County" during those perilous days, now 75 years ago.

I received a letter from the daughter of Patrick J. O'Donnell *LCI(L) 487* and *LCI(L)461* informing the Association of his passing. She wrote, *Of all the organizations he was affiliated with, the USS LCI National Association was the one he was most proud of. He wore the LCI hat everywhere he went. He was laid to rest wearing this hat at his request.*

To Patrick J. O'Donnell and all our fellow veterans, I want to acknowledge that you have a right to be proud of your accomplishment and we, as the Association, will continue to work toward preserving the legacy that you left to us.

Our collaboration with the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum that you will read about in our second joint December issue is one of the ways that we have chosen is helping to attain this goal. I hope to see all of you aboard the *LCI(L)-713* for our annual reunion in May 2019.

**Last Item: Your 2019 Dues Notice have been mailed. Please return them soon!**

## Waving the flag for the future

Rick Holmes, AFMM President

Even if you never get a chance to visit the LCI-713, find us on the web and take an online tour of the ship. If you look up at the mast and halyards, you may see a series of international signal flags:



**Mike:**

(Our) "Vessel is stopped."



**Kilo:**

"I wish to communicate with you."



**Victor:**

I require Assistance



**Romeo:**

(I am) preparing to replenish.



**Xray:**

"Watch for my signal."

As president of the nonprofit Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum, "I wish to communicate with you." The AFMM "requires assistance". Our "vessel is stopped." I am asking you and all our supporters to "Watch for my signal."

What I am communicating to you is that we "require assistance" to raise the funds to implement "Phase 2" of our hull restoration plan, which is to get the LCI-713 out of the water. The 75-year old hull of this World War II ship has never been out of the water since its launch in September 1944. The ship will need to be repaired in dry dock or on a barge. We are close. But we're not there. And we're running out of time.

In the fourteen years since 2005, when a group of veterans and volunteers launched the AFMM, we have invested probably a half-million dollars' worth of materials and man-hours (and women-hours in support) toward one goal: to restore the LCI-713 to operational status. The goal is that on *that* day I -- or my successor -- standing in the pilothouse, can call down to the engine room and command: "All ahead one third," and get underway.

The Romeo flag instructs: "I am preparing to replenish." So is the AFMM. Your annual support and membership provide the critical resources needed to sustain our organization and restore the LCI 713. In addition to the funding required for "Phase 2" we need to raise approximately \$20,000 to support our ongoing operations and fundraising programs in 2019.

### Here's how you can help:

- Make a *tax-deductible* donation to the AFMM by year's end.
- Become a member or upgrade your membership level.
- Purchase a membership for your family or friends this holiday season.
- Sign up to volunteer in 2019
- Include us in your will, living trust, life insurance proceeds or retirement plan.

***Yes, I want to help launch the LCI 713!***

***Happy holidays to all!***

For more information, call me at 541-226-5427 or email [afmm@amphibiousforces.org](mailto:afmm@amphibiousforces.org)

Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum  
Rick Holmes, President  
PO Box 17220 - Portland, OR 97217

*Note: If you don't want to use the form, it's ok..  
However, please keep us up to date on your contact  
info for our mailings. Thanks!*

**Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help get the LCI-713 underway.**

- Lifetime Membership \$500     Lifetime Veteran \$100     Annual Member \$20  
 Lifejacket Memorial \$250 (We will contact you for an inscription)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Vet (Y) or (N) \_\_\_\_\_

LCI or Ship affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ Branch/rank \_\_\_\_\_

(You may also contribute online via our website)

- My company offers a matching gift program.  
 Contact me about setting up an automatic monthly direct donation.  
 Send me information on including a legacy gift in my estate plan.  
 I would like to volunteer.  
 I would like to sponsor \_\_\_\_\_

My Gift Is:     In Memory of     In Honor of

Person's name \_\_\_\_\_

## AFMM and LCI-713 Board of Directors

Please feel free to contact any of us with any comments or questions.

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## LCI-713 Update

*Rich Lovell and Rick Holmes*

Even though the last Deck Log was just published in September, we have continued to make great progress on our restoration. But some wonder about the “*elephant in the room*” which is our hull restoration.

The good news is we have a plan, and the high-level view is as follows:

Phase 1: Complete a hull survey. This has been funded by the Kinsman Foundation and scheduled for November 2018.

Phase 2: Get the LCI-713 out of the water and onto a barge (preferred) or into a drydock. We have several possibilities here and we have some of the required funding.

Phase 3: The hull repair and engine installation. We will be able to better size and cost this effort once our survey is completed. This phase will be broken down into several steps, which are dependent on available funding.

Phase 4: The LCI-713 goes back into the water, for a shakedown cruise and Coast Guard inspections.

We are very optimistic, that we will get this done and that the LCI-713 will be around for a long time to tell the story to future generations.

If you follow us on [facebook.com/LCI713](https://www.facebook.com/LCI713), you may have seen some of the following photos, but here’s a taste of the work of our great crew over the last couple of months.

We also have had several large tours including the Sea Cadets from McMinville, OR, the Maritime Commerce Club, The USS Swordfish reunion and the local Harley Owners Group.



*US Naval Sea Cadets visit*



*Enough 20mm ammo boxes to fill our magazine were located and purchased by Mark Stevens. Jerry Gilmartin (pictured) organized the work party to fill the magazine.*



*New security lighting installed.*



*Troop 4 has more displays added. Taffrail log is in the front box, made by Lionel Train company. It was procured still in the new box.*



*Mark installing a spool for extra wire rope.*



*John is repainting the passageways and staterooms with fresh Seafoam Green. The decks in staterooms are olive drab/brown*



*Di-pole antenna is completely re-worked and a new whip antenna for Ship's entertainment radio is added.*



*Shore power project completed!*

## In Memory of a Motor Mac

By J Wandres

The September 2018 issue of *Elsie Item*, the news magazine of the LCI Veterans Association, carries a remembrance of the late MotorMac Phil Reed of Whittier, California. Reed died on September 24 at the age of 98. He was the last surviving crew member of LCI-35, that took part in the Allied invasion of occupied France, at Normandy on June 6, 1944.

It might be said of Reed (with a wink and a smile) that he had motor oil in his veins, too. A couple of months before he went on his eternal cruise he was featured in Hometown Heroes Podcast No. 536, which aired on August 9 to 12. Seated in one of the exquisitely restored vehicles of his automobile museum in Santa Fe Springs, California, he talked about his growing up in Michigan's upper peninsula close by Lake Superior. In winter there was snow, and more snow, and the deadweight lake snow. Often, he would work on the family Model – T Ford, which he learned to drive when he was eleven. His experience came in handy when he worked as a mechanic with the Depression era CCC Civilian Conservation Corp.

Reed was employed by Douglas Aircraft in California as a tool & die maker when World War II erupted. Reed joined the Navy and trained as a motor machinist mechanic. He was assigned to *LCI-35*, and would rise through the rank of MoMMc 1/c. In several posts on the Hometown Heroes blog Reed describes how his skills and ingenuity helped to solve numerous problems with the ship's propulsion systems. Reed was not outspoken; yet, he was not uncomfortable when he proclaimed: "I can fix anything." He also used his other skills to get up close and personal to Joy, whom he met at a

dance hall in Brighton. She came to the U.S. in 1947; they married, and added two sons, Mike and Dale, to the family. They stood by his side until the day he died in 2018.

If there was any other passion in Reed's life it was automobiles. He loved to tinker with, repair and drive old cars. The Reeds would return to England many years later to take part in the famed London to Brighton Vintage Car Run. Phil piloted a 1901 Winton – the only known vehicle of its type in existence. In 2008, then in his late 80s, Phil and Joy drove a 1926 Model T Ford from Baltimore, some 3,000 miles to Los Angeles. The trip helped to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Model T. Joy, loyal as always, smiled even as she admitted to being not "overjoyed" at 23 days on hard seats. In her later years her concession to comfort was a Cadillac. Phil chose a mini-Cooper.

Next door to the automobile museum is what makes it all go around: Electronic Chrome & Grinding, Inc. Plating of not your everyday household silverware. A process known as "hard-chrome plating" adds a coating of chromium to the inside walls of cylinders in an engine of a racing vehicle, like the 40,000-horsepower power plant in a dragster that burns nitro-methane fuel to propel the machine to over 300m.p.h., along a quarter-mile track, in less than 10 seconds. Plating the inside of the engine cylinders, then making them shiny smooth, reduces heat and wear, and maybe earns a championship run for the race team.

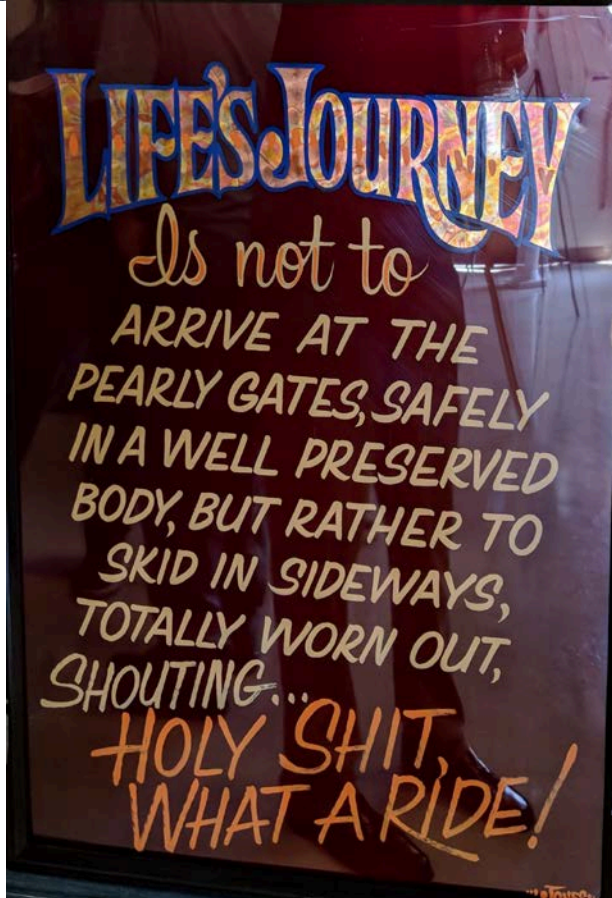
MotorMac Reed was a lifetime member of the USS LCI National Association, and a regular supporter of the Portland, Oregon-based Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum. AFMM owns and its volunteer crew is restoring *LCI (L) 713*, the last and



only such U.S. Navy amphibious landing craft of its type still afloat.

Philip Winspear Reed's family has asked that donations in Phil's name be made to:

**AFMM, P.O. Box 17220,  
Portland OR 97217.**



*From Phil's memorial service.*

## In Flanders Fields

By John McCrae, May 1915

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields

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### *Inspiration for "In Flanders Fields"*



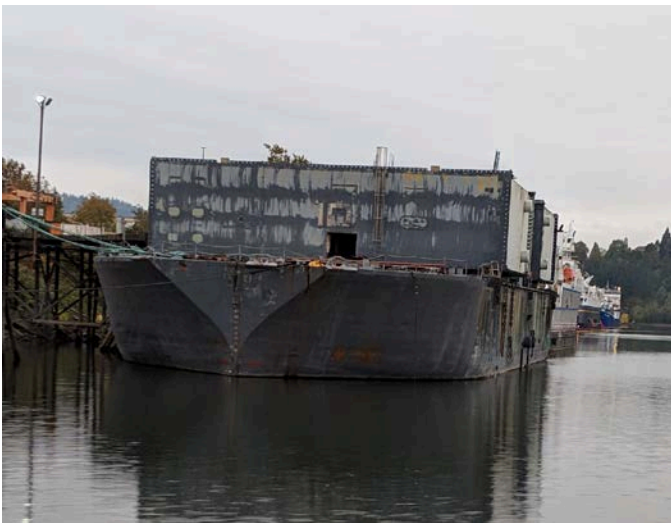
During the Second Battle of Ypres, a young Canadian artillery officer was killed by a German shell. His best friend was asked to conduct the burial service. Lieutenant John

McCrae (photo 1914) was the brigade doctor. After presiding over the funeral, he looked at the row of crosses and saw poppies growing in great numbers on the spoiled earth. He wrote his poem the next day, 3 May 1915. The poppy became the flower of remembrance for all war dead. Veterans Day marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of World War One.

# The USS *Artisan*: Rising to the Rescue

By J. Wandres

Visitors to Portland's Swan Island Fleet Landing – Gate 18 along Channel Drive – usually come to visit two restored World War II warships: patrol torpedo boat PT-658, and amphibious landing craft *LCI-713*. If visitors notice the weird-looking vessel also moored in the lagoon, they have no idea how and why it proved so valuable to the Allies' victory in the Pacific during World War II.



*Currently Unused Artisan Section at the Portland Vigor Industrial Shipyard*

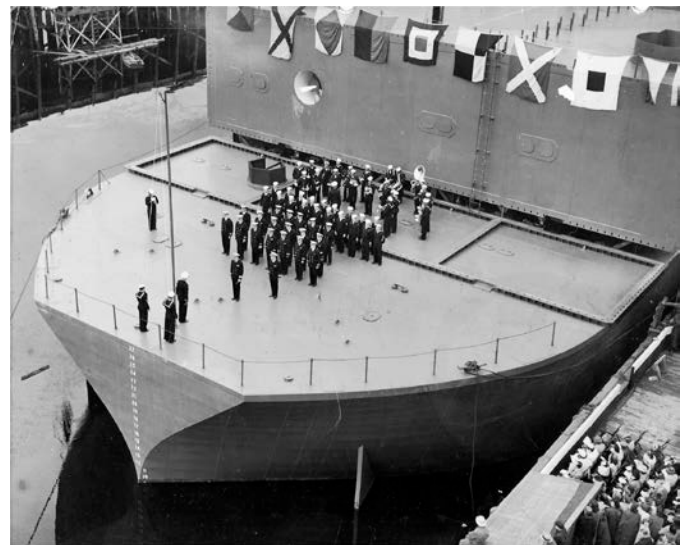
The vessel is one of ten sections that formed the ex-USS *Artisan*, one of the U.S. Navy's floating dry dock that served the U.S. Pacific fleet for more than five decades. Today, her steel complexion is a chalky gray, and age-flecked with rust. Straddling the 85-foot-wide hull are two 56-foot high wing walls that look like giant steel bookends.

Two of the dry dock's sections were built by Everett Pacific Co., of Everett, Washington. The vessel was commissioned 10 May 1943. With spectators attending, a navy band playing on the foredeck, the crew

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of 13 officers, five Chiefs and 13 enlisted stood at attention as Captain Andrew R. Mack, (USNA, 1918), took command of ABSD-1, an Advanced Base Sectional Dry dock.

It was a non-self-propelled vessel that had to be towed everywhere. The 3,500-ton hull was 280 feet long, 80 feet wide, and had a nine-foot draft. Each section had an 11,500-ton lift capability. The dry dock originally had two 15-ton cranes that ran on rails atop the wing walls (but were later removed by the Navy).



*Commissioning of the ABSD 1 at the Everett Shipbuilding Co, Everett, Washington May 10, 1943.*

One critic used its designation –ABSD-1 -- to call it the “Absurd-One.” But Captain Mack championed its value to the fleet: Having a ship repair facility in the Southwest Pacific meant U.S. warships would not need to return to Pearl Harbor for repairs. More to the point, the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 had the intent of preventing the United States from building bases in the Pacific theater of operations.

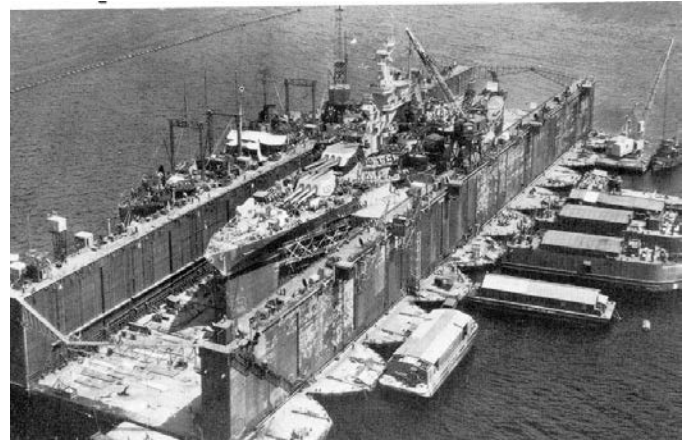
Meanwhile, eight other sections of the ABSD-1 were being layed up at shipyards in Illinois, Louisiana, and California. Each was towed to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides

islands, arriving in summer 1943. When cruising, the wing walls lay flat on the hull to reduce drag, lower the vessel's center of gravity, and increase stability of the dead weight. On station, hooking up the ten sections was no picnic. One section sank, killing its crew of 13, including Machinists Mate first class, Vernon Larson from Oregon. When that section was re-floated and connected to all the others, ABSD-1 was 927 feet long, with a beam of 256 feet, and displaced 38,500 tons. The 20-foot wide wing walls stood 56 feet high and were 140 feet apart. When deployed for use, the wing walls were lifted within a box strut by double 100-ton hydraulic jacks.

In the main hull were repair shops, crew's quarters, a galley and mess deck, and minimal "recreation" facilities. To get from the main deck to the top of the wing wall, a crew member had to climb a circular ladder some 85 steps up within the wing wall. The entire 10-section dry dock had a crew of 690 enlisted and officers.

After being flooded to allow a ship to enter, the pumps of all sections together could lift an aircraft carrier or battleship (minus planes, fuel, and ammo) -- a total of 90,000 tons -- warship and dry dock combined. (A 30-minute YouTube video shows USS *Idaho* (BB-42) entering ABSD-1 and then the dry dock being pumped out (or "de-watered" to use Navy terminology) to raise the dry dock nearly 80 feet.

As the allies continued their seaborne march closer to the Japanese home island, the dry dock was towed to Manicani Bay off Samar Island, southeast of the Philippines. As soon as ABSD-1 was on station it converted three LCIs of Flotilla Five into gunboats to carry out raids on Japanese shore installations.



*The battleship USS California (BB-44) in ABSD 1 at Espiritu Santo, September 1944 undergoing repairs from damage sustained when the ship collided with its sister battleship, the USS Tennessee (BB-43).*

ABSD-1 was decommissioned on 31 May 1946, but remained in reserve at Pearl Harbor until June 1951. It was then towed to the Marianas to be ready for service during the Korean War -- then a year old. In 1956 it was moored at Guam, where its crew held an on-board open house on Armed Forces Day. Following, the vessel was re-designated AFDB-1, "Large Auxiliary Floating Dry Dock." Finally, at Subic Bay in June 1979, the dry dock was "christened" USS *Artisan* -- the only navy ship to ever carry this name.

The USS *Artisan* never fired a shot in defense, but the ship and its crew were awarded four battle ribbons: American Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, World War Two Victory Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

In March 1998 one section was re-designated as "unclassified miscellaneous vessel IX-521." In 2001 IX-521 was stricken from the Naval List. The dry dock sections lay parked at Pearl Harbor, and were purchased by Cashman Marine, but not used. They were later auctioned. Vigor Industrial acquired two sections. A third was bought by a Chinese company, but began to

sink as it was being towed out of Pearl Harbor. Vigor acquired other sections and today, all four are still in use as Vigor's dry dock No. 5 – 75 years after Commander Mack assumed command.

The section moored along the banks of Swan Island lagoon is slightly smaller and is not operational. It is Section 1-D of the ex-ABSD *Artisan*. Some years ago, vandals gained access to the vessel. Over an extended period within the hull they made off all removable machinery, and all copper wiring – even to the degree of stripping and leaving behind all the insulation. Vigor was forced to weld shut all entry access.



*LCI 22 in for repair in ABSD-1. Photo most likely taken at Espiritu Santo.*

**From J. Wandres:** I am thankful to Vigor Dockmaster Ken Swingle and Assistant Dockmaster Tim McEntarffer for taking me on a “guided” tour of Section Four of Vigor's Drydock No. 5. It was an unusual feeling to explore the rusty compartments, to see a part of the galley still intact, the giant pumps and electrical equipment still in place – and still being used, and to know that it was home base for a crew of the Navy's Greatest Generation.

## NOW HEAR THIS!



**LCI VETERANS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS, Mark your calendar for May 3-5, 2019 in Portland, Oregon at Airport Sheraton Hotel.**



Plan to attend the 29th Annual USS LCI National Association Reunion in association with the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum. Hotel reservations under “LCI Reunion” Reunion details coming soon to the websites and in the next Elsie Item!

## The Color of their Contribution

By J. Wandres

To those black G.I.s from down south, the Pacific Ocean must have looked like the biggest damn body of water in the world; like World War II, it seemed to have no end. Day after day, while embarked in a U.S. Navy ship headed toward the Southwest Pacific, these army guys had been cooped up, seasick, aboard Infantry Landing Craft, USS *LCI 713*, as it steamed toward its objective.

Island by island the Japanese forces had been pushed back to their home island by superior allied forces: Midway Island fell in June 1942. Mindanao would be re-taken in August 1945. But it was only March. The 158-foot-long “Elsie Item” was steaming to support Operation Victor Four: the allied assault on the Japanese-held island of Mindanao in the Southwest Pacific. Soon after the soldiers and U.S. Marines stormed ashore, the 296<sup>th</sup> Port Company, on board *LCI-713*, would land at the port of Zamboanga, on Mindanao’s southwest coast. From there the Allies would re-supply G.I.s slogging through the jungles as they pushed the Japanese back.



*Port Company in combat gear*

The LST’s had offloaded combat units on to the shores of Mindanao. Now, the “small

boys” – like *LCI-713* – would go in to do their job. The 296<sup>th</sup> Port Company would set up a supply depot at Zamboanga. What made the 296<sup>th</sup> stand out is that it was the *only* such unit made up entirely of African-Americans (then legally called “Colored” soldiers). And the 296<sup>th</sup> was attached to Oregon’s 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division – the “Jungleers.”



*Port Company working fog oils*

The paper records of the 296<sup>th</sup> Port Company are probably moldering in some archive box at the National Archives. If any of those “colored” boys are still with us -- though in their nineties – they, too, are members of The Greatest Generation. Yet, their service is barely remembered today, which is why it is honored by the very ship that carried them to Mindanao: the former *USS LCI-713*.



*Port Company working gasoline cans*

# Gator Gossip

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

The September 2018 issue of *Elsie Item* included the article “Fighting an Unseen Enemy with FEDCU One in Korea.” The article detailed how *LCI(L) 1091* was renamed *LSI(L) 1091* and served in Korea as a Fleet Epidemic Disease Control Ship. David T. McGregor in Flint, Michigan recalls serving on the *1091* during the Korean War.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Hi Jeff,

This is David T. McGregor, EN2/c. I served on the *1091* from April 1950 to September 1952. I was a crew member on the *1091* when this article (*Fighting An Unseen Enemy*) took place. This was a rather rough trip weather wise, plus reactions from the shots we had to take as a medical safeguard. On the way to Wanson Harbor we encountered a mine that had broken loose from its moorings. We tried to detonate it with our 20mm’s to no avail. Very rough seas and a lack of an experienced gunner didn’t help.



*FEDCU 1 emblem embroidered on McGregor's jacket. See color version on back cover.*

Enclosed is a photo of the “FEDCU 1” emblem. I had it embroidered on the back of a jacket I had made from an undress blues jumper, while in Japan (for engine repairs). We were between trips to Korea on the *1091*. More than one trip had to be canceled because of engine troubles on the *1091*.

*David T. McGregor*

**Editor’s Note:** See the color version of the “FEDCU 1” emblem on the back cover of this issue.

The *LCI(L) 1091* was launched 14 December 1944. She arrived in the Pacific in the spring of 1945, fought at Okinawa and was used as a minesweeper to clean up around Japan after the war. After Korea the *LSI(L) 1091* became one of the Navy’s smallest aircraft carriers. She was used to launch anti-aircraft target drones. She was decommissioned in 1955, sold for commercial use and operated as cannery ship for salmon on the Yukon River. Today she is in drydock as a museum ship for the Humboldt Bay Naval Sea/Air Museum at Eureka, CA.

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I look forward to hearing from you too.

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# Fateful Day for LCI(G) 471

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

**E**nsign Larry Hermes stared at the mass of rock that rose up out of the Northern Pacific Ocean. There it was, Iwo Jima. “Just a barren rock, an ugly looking thing,” he thought. Hermes was at his GQ station on the starboard 40mm of LCI 471.

It was 17 February 1945. The morning mist had cleared as the sun rose above Mt. Surabachi. A dozen LCIs were aligned while approaching the southeastern shore of Iwo Jima. Their mission was to provide gun support for an underwater demolition team (UDT). These Navy frogmen would be clearing obstructions, mines and gathering beach data needed for the main invasion scheduled for two days later. Seven LCI gunboats 438, 441, 449, 450, 457, 473 and 474 would be providing close-in gun support. Five more LCIs 346, 348, 466, 469, and the 471 – were held in reserve in case any LCIs on the firing line needed to be replaced.

Vapors could be seen rising-up out of the volcanic rock on Iwo Jima, code named “HOTROCKS.” Each sailor on deck had a hellish view of what they were approaching. One said, “The ominous-looking island with steam spouting here and there reminded him of Dante’s *Inferno*.” Others recalled the smell. The island emitted a pungent odor of sulfur, that smelled like rotten eggs. The Japanese translation of Iwo Jima is in fact “Sulfur Island.”

**Ensign Larry Hermes, LCI(G) 471:** *The Island of Iwo Jima was smoking from aerial*

*and naval bombardments. It seemed like the head of some giant serpent or dragon peeping out of the water. It looked ugly and lethal then, and it lived up to its appearance in the days and weeks to come.*

Larry Hermes was from Houston, Texas. He had been attending Rice Institute and majoring in chemistry when the war broke out. He joined the Navy Reserve in 1943. After graduating from Rice, he went to midshipmen’s school and was commissioned in September of 1944. “I was 20 years old at the time. Known as a 90-day wonder. That’s what they called Ensigns in those days.” From there he hop-scotched across the Pacific from Hawaii, to Johnson Island, Kwajalein, Saipan, and finally Guam. He was told his ship was down in Alpha Harbor.



**Ensign Larry Hermes, LCI(G) 471:** *I went down to the harbor and got on the ship along with two other ensigns, both with names starting with “H.” They went down the alphabet when assigning ensigns. We were on LCI(G) 471.*



*Ensign Larry Hermes (front-right) with crewmembers of the LCI(G) 471*

The three new ensigns were L.M. Hermes, Jr., Louis P. Hagen and David H. Hardy. They joined executive officer Kingdon Balzer, engineering officer Charles Crandall and commanding officer LT(jg) Robert S. Hudgins. The 471 was assigned to the Amphibious Flotilla 3 Group 8 that included 12 LCI gunboats. These ships had all been converted from LCI(L) landing ships to the new gunboat classification. Their primary mission was close in support of the UDT swimmers prior to invasions. The Navy had found out that it was important to know something about the beach and water conditions prior to sending in the Marines. At Tarawa, ignorance of beach conditions caused many casualties during the landings. The frogmen would clear paths and provide intelligence that helped invasion planners.

These LCI gunboats were armed with four 20mm and three 40mm guns plus deck-mounted 4.5-inch rocket launchers. This amount of armament required larger crews.

*Ensign Larry Hermes: The LCI was nice because everybody knew everybody. It was rather crowded because we were converted to a gunboat. Our ship was only 158 feet long and 23 feet wide. It wasn't very big.*

LCIs had been originally designed for a full-time crew of 24 and 3 officers. They could transport about 200 troops for short distances. After being converted to a gunboat they needed a crew 64 plus 6 officers. This stretched the capabilities of feeding and personal hygiene. The ships galley didn't have enough food storage for a larger crew. On longer stretches of ocean, they would run out of fresh and refrigerated chow. And there was just one two-foot by two-foot shower stall with virtually no pressure and only salt water. Most men showered on the fantail with a fire hose, cold salt water and special salt water soap. Rain squalls were most welcome. The whole crew would go on deck to soap up in fresh water. It didn't take Hermes very long to become acquainted with the ship, the crew and his new way of life. A bigger challenge was the intense training for the next invasion. It was a top-secret location called island X. Group 8 LCIs assembled at Ulithi for maneuvers and rocket bombardment training. Even when the invasion target had leaked out, few members of the crew had ever heard of Iwo Jima.



*Iwo Jima is located 750 miles southeast of Japan. It was needed for emergency landings of B-29 bombers. Mt. Suribachi rises 528 feet above the southern tip. Smoke on the northeastern shore is from a naval bombardment.*



On D-Day minus 2 helmsman Robert Dotson stood at the wheel of *LCI 471*. He steered toward secret island X (Iwo Jima) staying on a position with four other LCIs well behind the main body of gunboats. They were being held in reserve to replace any damaged ships on the firing line. He'd been on board for the previous invasions in the Marianas. The *471* came through those campaigns unscathed. This one seemed more ominous. He could see the forward group of LCIs as they neared the beach. This rear-reserve position felt safer.

Robert Dotson was from a small farming community of Tappers Plains, Ohio. It was a crossroads with about 200 residents. Dotson worked summers at the Texaco service station. He pumped gas, changed oil, and fixed flats. He got engaged to his high school sweetheart just before leaving for the Navy. Dotson joined up after graduation in 1943. He was an 18-year old kid.

***Robert Dotson, LCI 471:*** *I'd never been away from home before. So, when I took my oath of allegiance to the United States for the U.S. Navy, well then, I was on a trip that was scary and frightening. Because being away from home for the first time at my age, was quite an experience.*

Dotson saw flashes of smoke coming out of Surabachi and all along the shoreline. Splashes could be seen around the gunboats and then explosions as ships started getting hit. The Japanese gunners had all seven of the LCIs targeted perfectly. There were range marker buoys positioned 1,000 yards from the beach. The Jap shore batteries had been preset for that range. They opened-up with artillery and mortars when the ships entered their killing field. Apparently,

Japanese commanders thought this was the first wave of the actual invasion. Within minutes every LCI had been hit. Some were on fire, one was listing. Dotson's safe place took a turn for the worse when Captain Hudgins yelled, "We are going in."

*LCI(G) 438* – the unit's flagship – was severely damaged. The flag was moved to *LCI(G) 471*. Ensign Hermes heard the order to go into the beach. He was the officer in charge of the 40mm guns located immediately forward of the circular conning tower. Hermes prepared his gun crews. They would begin returning fire as soon as they were within range. The communication officer, Ensign Hardy was directed to leave his battle station on the bow guns. He headed to the radio room. He would be needed there to decode orders to the flagship. Moments after the *438* had been relieved the water all around the *471* erupted with small geysers from mortar rounds.

***Ensign Larry Hermes:*** *As the 471 entered the beach area we passed the 449 to the starboard. It was badly damaged and smoking – only one person could be seen topside and he was staggering towards the fantail. I've always wondered if that was LT Herring who won the Medal of Honor for saving his *LCI(G)* by using the emergency steering on the fantail. On our port side the *LCI(G) 474* was lying on its side awaiting a watery grave.*

The *471* opened-up with heavy firing at the menacing shore batteries. Rocket crews were preparing to fire their barrage. Doston steered through the wreckage of burning ships to get closer for the rocket launch. Over 500 of the 4.5-inch rockets could be launched within one minute. Each rocket

carried the destructive power of a 5-inch shell. This devastating bombardment was sure to silence many of the enemy mortars.

***Ensign Larry Hermes:*** *We got hit by large shell, probably equivalent to a 157mm shell that came from the cannons on Mt. Suribachi. The shell hit the portside below the main deck and exploded in the crew's quarters near an ammunition locker. Fires broke out, but we were able to put them out. We got back into position to fire rockets, but they wouldn't fire. The electrical system that fired the rockets had been knocked out. Telephone communication from the bridge to the gun crews was disrupted too.*

A few minutes later a mortar hit the well deck next to the rocket launchers. The only damage was a hole in the deck. A few feet closer to the armed but useless rockets and the 471 could have been blown in two. All guns were constantly firing until a third shell hit in the gun tub on the portside bow. It exploded along with a pile of stored ammunition. The carnage of dead, dying and wounded sailors spread from the bow to the well deck. Fires broke out below deck and on the bow.

***Ensign Larry Hermes:*** *My gunners were firing away to answer shore batteries. I was frustrated because I couldn't hear anything in my phones. I threw them down and bent to pick up a 40mm clip to help with the loading. That's when they got hit in the bow. It exploded all the ammunition up there. A piece of shrapnel went right over my back and into the conning tower. It made a hole the size of my thumb. I still have that piece of shrapnel.*

After Hermes picked up his lucky piece of shrapnel, he saw the bodies and body parts scattered all over the forward section the ship. There had been 17 men on the bow manning two 20s and a 40mm. They needed help, but there were fires that needed putting out first. Once the fires were under control, the gruesome task of tending to the wounded began. One sailor had his legs blown off. Morphine was the only thing that could help him. He died shortly afterward. Nine men were dead and six more wounded. But not Ensign Hardy. Fortunately, he had been directed to the radio room minutes before the hit to his battle station. The secret messages that would have given the LCIs new orders could not be decoded by Hardy. He had not been given the decoding key. Every ship was on its own. Those that could continue to fight back, stayed on the firing line to support the UDTs who were still on the beach.

The 471 had wounded who needed immediate medical care. Captain Hudgins ordered his ship's withdrawal. Dotson swung away from Iwo Jima and headed for the battleship *Tennessee*. The wounded were transferred for medical attention. A shocked crew began preparing dead comrades for burial at sea. Two other crewmembers died from wounds aboard the *Tennessee*.

***Ensign Larry Hermes:*** *The Captain asked me to conduct a burial service. I was a Catholic and got the Catholics on the ship to go to Mass on Sundays. I never buried anybody in my life. I was an Alter Boy when I was younger. Anyway, my Catholic prayer book had about two lines about burial. There was a Lutheran prayer book on the*

*ship that had a whole page. So, I got it and we dropped the bodies. We wrapped them in canvass sacks with two rockets. My roommate, Ensign Louis P. Hagen was killed on the bow. It was a gruesome day.*

Because of extensive damage to all the LCI ships in Group 8, none of them participated in the invasion two days later. All 12 ships received the Presidential Unit Citation. Eleven of the commanding officers received the Navy Cross. LT Herring, the Captain of *LCI(G) 449* received the Medal of Honor. His ship's story is told in the book "The Heart of Hell."

A most memorable event took place six days later about mid-morning on 23 February 1945. "I was out on deck and looked up," said Larry Hermes. "There was a flag on top of Mt. Suribachi." I hollered, look there's a flag up on Hot Rocks. Everyone came out and cheered."

*LCI(G) 471* was sent back to Pearl Harbor for repairs. Dotson was sent back to the states for a 30-day leave. He got married while on leave. "Couldn't wait no longer. I'd been engaged for two years," he said.

***Helmsman Robert Dotson LCI(G) 471:***  
*That was a fine ship. We had a fine crew. We had a fine captain. When you go aboard a vessel you ask permission to board, and you salute the flag. When you leave it, you ask permission to go ashore, and you salute the flag. I hated to leave the 471.*

RESOURCES: Oral histories by the National Museum of the Pacific War for Larry Hermes and Robert Dotson, AFMM Deck Log December 2016, [usslci.org](http://usslci.org), [Navsource.org](http://Navsource.org), [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org), "The Heart of Hell" by Mitch Weiss

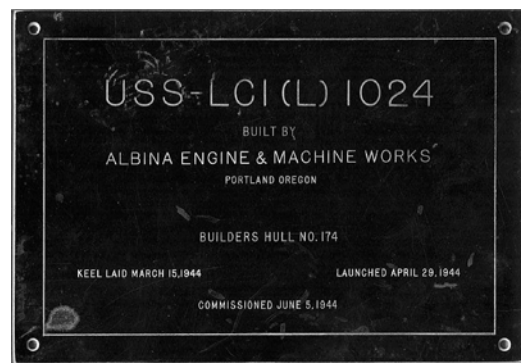
## Skipper of *LCI(R) 1024* was "Eddie" to his crew

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

Navy regulations were sometimes *misinterpreted* aboard the LCIs. Crews of these small ships with big guns and dangerous missions, had a swagger. Such was the case aboard the *USS LCI(R) 1024*. It was commanded by Lieutenant Commander Edward J. Ritz USNR. Even the lowest ranked Seaman would address the ship's captain with "Morning Eddie."



The *1024* was commissioned as an LCI(L) on 5 June 1944. She was reclassified as Landing Craft Infantry (Rocket) on 15 March 1945 with LCDR Ritz in command.



*USS LCI(L) 1024 builder's plaque.*

Her armament had been increased to one 40mm and four 20mm guns, two 50 cal. machine guns and six 5-inch rocket launchers. She now had a crew of 31

enlisted and 3 officers. She was assigned to Flotilla 16 in support of landings for the Okinawa campaign beginning on 20 March 1945.

Ritz had grown up in Portland, Oregon and graduated from the University of Oregon in 1941. He joined the Navy later that year and was commissioned as an Ensign. He moved up through the ranks while stationed in San Diego and Pearl Harbor. By 1945, the 29-year old Ritz was a LCDR and Captain of the *1024*. His ship and crew were heading off to the biggest battle of the Pacific War...Okinawa.



*Conning tower of the LCI(R) 1024*

Amphibious rocket ships were needed for close-in shore bombardment ahead of landings. Later in the campaign they provided diversionary assaults and support for advancing ground troops. On 14 May the *1024* entered Naha Harbor along with LCI(R)s *704*, *705*, *785*, *1026*, and *1068*. The shallow draft LCIs were able to navigate the reefs forming a narrow channel into the

harbor. Rocket barrages helped ground troops take the City of Naha stronghold.

By June the Japanese had been pushed to the southern tip of Okinawa. The *1024* was ordered to patrol that coastline. There was no shortage of targets for them to strafe or bombard. Japanese troops could be seen on cliffs and beaches attempting to escape the advance of American troops. While strafing one group of Japs the *1024*'s shells hit an ammo dump. There was a huge explosion. Shore batteries made futile attempts to continue the fight by firing on the LCI flotilla. One mortar round landed just 15 feet off the *1024*'s starboard beam.

When most resistance on Okinawa ended, soldiers and civilians could be seen all along Okinawa's beaches. An interpreter on one of the LCIs learned that many of them wanted to surrender.



*LCI crews tried to talk Japanese soldiers into surrendering. This translator uses a sound powered megaphone to communicate with people who could be seen on the southern beach of Okinawa.*

Five starving Japanese soldiers took off their uniforms and swam out to the *1024* to surrender. They were given dungarees and food. Photos were taken with the POWs before being turned over to a larger ship.



*These Jap soldiers swam out to 1024 to surrender. They were naked. Dungarees were issued.*



*LCI(R) 1024 en route to the U.S. Note the homeward bound pennant on the mast and dragon art/16 on the con tower.*



*LCDR Ritz (cookie cutter mustache) and crew had a photo-op with their POWs.*

The Battle of Okinawa and the war were nearly over. The 1024 would be assigned to occupation until 15 October 1945. Ritz would return home to Portland and raise a family. He worked for the Postal Service until his early death in 1954.



*Jap POWs were not very squared away recruits.*



*A laid-back crew enjoying their South Pacific luxury cruise on the LCI(R) 1024.*

*On October 21, 2018 at the Luncheon following a Memorial Service for the members of Taffy 3, I was informed that many of the almost 100 family members in attendance knew little or nothing of the actual ordeal of their family member after the Battle off Samar, October 25, 1944. I read the following story to the group.*

## **LCIs to the Rescue**

By Leon Fletcher LCI(R) 71

### ***"STAND BY TO GET UNDERWAY! IMMEDIATELY!! EMERGENCY"***

That order, passed aboard the USS *LCI(R) 71* while at anchor in San Pedro Bay off Leyte Island in the Philippines, started one of the most dramatic search-and-rescue missions ever.

Some 90 miles north, 60 miles east of Samar Island, hundreds of American sailors were clinging to life rafts and floater nets— survivors of ships sunk in a fierce battle with Japanese warships.

It was 0850, Wednesday, October 25, 1944, when Captain Walter V.R. Vieweg, Commanding Officer of the USS *GAMBIER BAY* (CVE 73) gave that most dreaded order. "Abandon ship!"

The ship's engine rooms were flooded; steering control was gone; radars were out; fires were burning on the flight deck, and the hanger deck. The ship was "in a sinking condition surrounded by three enemy cruisers firing at point blank range," the Action Report would state.

**DELAY** But it was not until 1711, 8 hours 21 minutes later, that five LCIs and two PCs were ordered to go to the aid of the survivors. The delay was caused by three problems, according to the Navy's foremost historian Samuel Eliot Morrison, in his book *History of U.S. Naval Operations in WWII, Leyte*. The big Catalina

seaplanes which normally would be the first to search were "too busy rescuing the victims of plane crashes to go looking for survivors from ships." Ships which would usually be sent to pluck survivors from the waters were busy defending themselves against "intermittent Kamikaze attacks;" and the command organization was confusing. Also, there was still another delay before the ships could start searching: most had to take time to refuel, their tanks were down to about 20% capacity, far too little to attempt the mission. They had not replenished since arriving in the Philippines five days before because other vessels - PT boats, mine sweepers, tugs, and other small special-purpose craft - had higher priorities for the limited supply of fuel available from the tankers lying off Leyte's invasion beaches.

**ASSISTANCE** - While refueling, one of the rescue ships welcomed aboard a medical team sent from the amphibious force flagship USS *Blue Ridge* (AGC2) to augment the staff already aboard the ships. The team consisted of staff surgeon Lt. D.B. Lucas and Pharmacist Mates William Wattengel and James E. Cupero. They brought with them only a small box of medical supplies; there was no time to procure extra blankets or clothing," Morrison wrote. After Dr. Lucas boarded, he learned, to his surprise, he was the only doctor on any of the vessels, these ships were too small to rate any medical personnel higher than a pharmacist mate.

At 1835, 9 hours 45 minutes, after the carrier sunk, the rescue ships were finally underway, heading for the last reported location of the survivors. The rescue teams' speed: 9.5 knots, the most the slowest ship could make in the slightly rough waters; it would take them nearly ten hours to reach the survivors. (Destroyers could have made the run in about three hours).

The rescue team, Task Group 78.12, consisted of *LCI(R) 34, LCI(R) 77, LCI(R) 337, LCI(R) 347, LCI(G) 340*, plus *PC 623* and *PC 1119*.

**COMMAND** - In ordering these seven little ships to the rescue, Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey, Commander of the Amphibious Force of the 7th fleet, appointed the Commanding Officer of *PC 623*, Lt. Commander J. A. Baxter, as commander of the group, and most histories of the event credit Baxter with leading the rescue. Once the task group had formed, Baxter conferred by short distance voice radio with the commanding officers of the other ships in the unit. He then learned that Lt. Commander R. E. Sargent, the Commander of LCI(R) Group 20 was aboard one of the vessels, the USS *LCI(R) 71*. Sargent had considerable experience in maneuvering groups of ships, and he out-ranked Baxter.

*(Note an LCI Group was made up of total of 12 ships)*

Baxter decided to turn over command of the task group to Sargent. I was Sargent's Communications Officer.

**THE SEARCH** - At 0830, the next morning, Thursday, October 26, after the survivors had been in the water 23 hours 40 minutes, the rescue ships arrived at the location to which Sargent estimated the men and their rafts had probably drifted. There, some 30 miles south of the actual position of the sinking, he ordered his ships into a line abreast, a mile between each ship, and began 25 mile sweeps north and south, working west toward Samar Island. By then, "Several groups of survivors sighted each other and closed within hailing distance," the *GAMBIER BAY'S* captain reported later.

In the rafts, the more seriously injured were given space in which to lie down. Men in better condition took turns holding to the sides of the rafts or floating nearby.

**TERROR** - Sharks circled, *Gambier Bay* Radioman Bill MORELAND recalled. "One big

shark just swam around under our raft. For some reason it didn't attack anybody, but it sure worried us."

Other sharks did attack. Men who died were cast adrift; that gave the injured more space on the rafts.

Aboard the rescue ships, extra look outs were posted. In addition, off-duty radiomen, machinist mates, and cooks, searched the seas even when not assigned as lookouts.

Shortly after noon a sailor aboard one of the rescue ships spotted the first encouraging sign, flotsam. Hopes soared!

But the joy was brief: as the debris passed close aboard, it became clear it was but scraps from a Japanese vessel.

The search resumed.

**DISAPPOINTMENT** - At 1500, 30 hours 40 minutes after the sinking, a lookout aboard the *LCI(R) 71* sighted a man in the water, supporting himself by holding on to a metal ammo box held upside down to keep air inside for flotation. The ship's engines were stopped, and the rest of the task group was alerted. This survivor turned out to be a Japanese sailor, nude except for a loin cloth. He was taken aboard and given clothes and food. He was questioned for about an hour, but his only replies were nervous smiles.

(Later, as the first American survivors were picked up. the Japanese was locked in a small head. Survivors were not told he was aboard, and when the ship returned to Leyte the prisoner was spirited away on a special boat arranged for in advance by radio: he left before American survivors realized who he was). *(Editor note, The attendees at the 2018 Taffy 3 reunion in San Antonio admitted they were unaware of his presence aboard the rescue ship)*

Darkness fell: the LCIs and PCs continued to search. By now, lack of drinking water had become a major problem for the survivors. Some could not bear the shortage: they drank from the ocean and became delirious.

Several, no one kept count, swam away from their rafts and were never seen again.

**SUCCESS** - At 2230, 37 hours 40 minutes after the *Gambier Bay* sunk, lookouts on several rescue ships, straining to peer through the darkness, sighted Very Signal Stars on the horizon to the west. *PC 623* was sent ahead to investigate, the other ships followed.

Unable to see more than a few hundred feet, officers in command of the rescue ships maneuvered their vessels toward the signals with considerable caution, fearing they might be heading into an enemy trap. Survivors, too, were apprehensive. "Word got around (the rafts) that something dark was approaching us." Radioman Lee L McCollum wrote later. "We didn't know what to expect, whether it would be an enemy craft or our own....It was decided to take a chance and shoot the few remaining flares"

A PC turned on a searchlight, pointed at the survivors. "Are you Americans?" someone on the patrol craft called, survivor Bill Moreland remembered.

It was 2400. Friday, October 27 as the first survivors were eased aboard the rescue ships. The poor fellows were shivering with cold and suffering from thirst, hunger, and fatigue. Every bunk on board (the rescue ships) and a large part of the deck space was turned over to them." Navy historian Morrison would write, the seriously wounded were put aboard *PC 1119*. Before dawn she left for Leyte with 183 survivors to be transferred to hospital ships.

Sunrise came at 0627; the men had been in the water for 45 hours. 37 minutes. By then, some rafts had drifted to only a few miles off Tugnug Point, off Samar Island, a dense jungle which, some feared, was still enemy territory.

**More SURVIVORS** - At 0745, 46 hours 55 minutes after the carrier sank, the rescue ships continued to pull *Gambier Bay* victims from the waters, more rafts were sighted, about 12 miles northeast. Rescue ships closed and found survivors from another American ship sunk by the Japanese, the USS *SAMUEL B ROBERTS* (DE 413). Soon additional survivors were being pulled from the Pacific, men who had abandoned the sunken destroyers USS *HOEL* (DD533) and USS *JOHNSTON* (DD557).

The crews of the rescue ships gave the survivors the best they had, fresh water, medical aid, hot food, refreshing showers, clean clothing, shaving gear, whatever they asked for that was available.

At 1000, 49 hours 10 minutes after the men had abandoned the *Gambier Bay*, after the rescue ships had spent hours repeatedly sweeping and cross-sweeping the area, rescue commander Sargent decided, and the commanding officers agreed, all survivors had been found. He ordered his ships to head south, to return to Leyte.

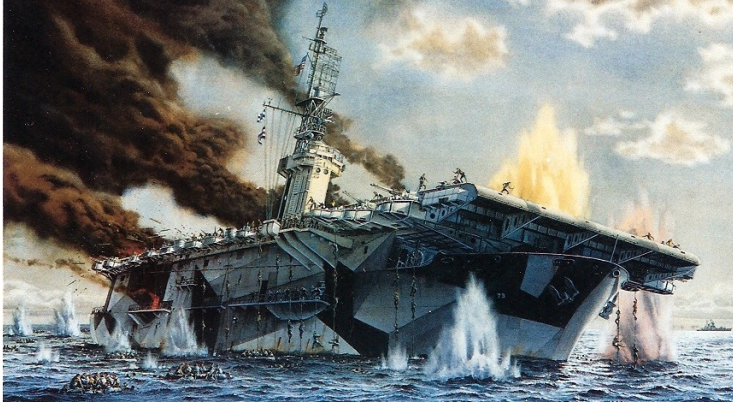
**HAZARDS** - En route, an occasional flight of one or two Japanese planes flew over the rescue formation. Because the ship's decks were covered with survivors, it was impractical to go to General Quarters, but gun crews were posted for the rest of the trip.

Later, two enemy planes stayed within close visual range for several minutes They prompted Sargent, to radio a request to the Commander of Amphibious Forces, who ordered the rescue mission, for air coverage. None appeared.

Since the crews of the rescue ships had given their own bunks to the survivors, they had to search for other places to sleep. One LCIer slept in the radio shack, on the small chart table about the size of a card table. Another said, later. "I got some sleep lying on the edge of a life raft that was lashed upright, outboard on the port side of the LCI's deckhouse."



0113, Saturday, October 28, 64 hours 23 minutes after the carrier had been abandoned, the rescue ships anchored off Leyte and began transferring survivors to hospital ships and transports.



*This painting of the USS Gambier Bay (CV-57) shows the ship on fire, listing and receiving continuous naval shelling while sailors abandon ship. She became the only aircraft carrier to be sunk by naval gunfire. The Battle of Leyte Gulf and this heroic action by the Taffy 3 escort carriers and destroyers became the last great naval ship battle.*

**RESULTS** - The LCIs and PCs rescued about 1,150 survivors. The *Gambier Bay* had a crew of 849; 727 (86%) were rescued. The three destroyer-types had a combined complement of about 937; some 423 (45%) were saved.

Later, one of the survivors, Radioman McCollum, would write. "Our prayers had been answered; we had been saved."

The LCIs and PCs had successfully completed a difficult mission their designers never envisioned.

*Story submitted by Robert E. Wright Jr*

## In Memoriam

LCI 23  
Jean Burner

LCI 35  
Phil Reed

LCI 70  
Kenneth Merritt

LCI 73, 1064  
Hugh Margrave

LCI 455  
Marvin Carpenter

LCI 510  
William Hill

LCI (L)(G)(M) 739  
James A. Weise

LCI 1010  
Ted Wichrowski

LCI(L)(G)(M) 739  
James A. Weise

LCI 1062  
Wilford Beal



## LCI Vets travel to San Diego to attend Veteran's Day Parade

*By Joe Flynn*

We know LCI Vets love to travel, especially Royal Wetzel, LCI(G) 70 and Delbert Hollinger, LCI(G) 470. On Nov. 8, Wetz traveled from York, PA to San Diego with sidekick Pete Selan, LCI Assn. Secretary. Meeting them in San Diego was Del Hollinger, of Pismo Beach, CA, and LCI Associate member Brian O'Mara of Gilroy, CA. Since, this reporter lives in San Diego, I didn't have to travel far. Wetz said he had been in San Diego before; in 1943 when he shipped out to the Campaign in the Pacific.

The group stayed in the same hotel that hosted the 1995 LCI Reunion when a crew of LCI Vets sailed the LSIL 1091 from Eureka, CA to San Diego. That reunion, with 950 registered guests was the largest ever. Oh yes, the hotel has been remodeled and is just a couple blocks to Midway Carrier Museum.

On Friday, Nov. 9, the group toured the Midway, the longest serving carrier in the Navy, which now ranks as the top tourist attraction in San Diego and the fifth in the US. It was an all-day affair even if you are selective. Volunteers are well on their way to restoring and displaying all aircraft that have flown off the Midway. They do of course, have a plane flown by LCI Veteran Bill Keeler, who skippered the LCI(L) 615 in WW II and went on to become a Navy pilot.

We did not see all of the ship, but my iphone said I covered over three miles, keeping up with our LCI Vets. We left the ship and visited the Bob Hope plaza next to the ship. Lifesize bronze statues show Hope with statues of members of all the branches

of service that he entertained from WWII to Vietnam.

Next to Bob Hope plaza is the 50-foot-tall "Unconditional Surrender" iconic statue of the Sailor kissing the Nurse at the end of WW II. Wetz loved it. But unlike most sailors, he said the sailor in the photo and statue was NOT him. He said "I was in the Pacific."

On Saturday, we walked a couple blocks to the bleacher seating to watch the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual San Diego Veteran's Day Parade. It was billed as the largest such parade in the US. With San Diego's extensive active duty, retired military personnel, and veterans, along with the Navy and Marine installations, the capacity is there. All branches of service were represented, yes, even the Army. The Marine Corps Band is always a thrill.

We know Wetz talks to everybody so after the parade, he had a chance to talk with Jack Lyons, retired USMC Infantry officer and recipient of the Silver Star, and other awards. Lyons was the Parade Grand Marshall.



*Royal Wetzel with Jack Lyon,, USMC Infantry Officer, Vietnam, Silver Star recipient and Grand Marshall of the San Diego Veteran's Parade.*



*San Diego Veteran's Day. From left, Royal Wetzel, Brian O'Mara, Pete Selan, Joe Flynn, and Del Hollinger. USS Midway in Background*



*Three entertainers; Del Hollinger LCI (G) 470, Bob Hope, and Royal "Kazoo King" Wetzel, LCI(G)70.*



*Two LCI Sailors on San Diego Bay cruise, Royal Wetzel and Del Hollinger. Lots to talk about.*

On Nov.10, Brian O'Mara arranged a tour of the San Diego Destroyer Base. CPO Julius (Jay) Rindler, USN Ret., conducted the tour. The fleet was in so they got to see destroyers, amphibious assault ships and a number of the new Littoral Combat Ships, the grandsons of the LCI'S that can hit 55 knots. Just a bit faster than Granddad.



*A couple old salts on an old ship. Wetz and Del at the helm of the Star of India, in San Diego Maritime Museum*



*Del Hollinger, CPO Julius Rindler and Royal Wetzel at the San Diego Destroyer Base tour.*

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE PSALM

NASB Psalm 23, John 10:27, 28, I Samuel 17, 23, II Samuel 15

Psalm 23 is probably the most memorable of the Psalms. It is read at the memorial service of the common citizen as well as the well-known in business and Government.

The Psalmist, as it were, takes us from the glen through the gorge and the pleasant places of life, to eternal glory. He says “the Lord is my Shepherd”, identifying himself as one in the fold of the “Good Shepherd”. Those in the fold enjoy his provision as well as the Shepherd’s protection.

I will not try to improve on the words of this beautiful song, lest I spoil it. I try to imagine David singing (maybe) or at least thinking, the things mentioned therein during three phases of his story:

1. When he faced the giant Goliath. , I Samuel 17.
2. When he was hunted by King Saul through the hills, forests and caves. I Samuel 23.
3. His son Absalom led a rebellion against him. II Samuel 15.

Some say he wrote this song at the end of his life, perhaps that is true, but I believe it depicts his life on earth and on to his hope of eternal glory. As you read the Psalm below, let its beauty captivate you. Walk with David and say “The Lord is my Shepherd”.

## A Psalm of David. Psalm 23

1. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.
3. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.
6. Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Jesus said in John 10:27, 28 “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, and I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them from my hand”.

It is a great comfort to those in the fold to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd”.

*Ebenezer* (I Samuel 7:12)

RM-1/C Abe Lorenzo LCI 409, LCI 47



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**Attention LCI Veterans and Associates**

**We need your stories now. Write or email Jeff Veessenmeyer (see addresses page 2).**

USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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**During the Korean Conflict a Fleet Epidemic Disease Control Unit was formed. This is the patch for FEDCU ONE *LSI(L) 1091***



David T. McGregor EN2/c served on the *1091* from April 1950 to September 1952. He saw the *Elsie Item 102* article from September 2018 “Fighting an Unseen Enemy with FEDCU ONE in Korea.” He pulled out his coat and took a photo of the patch he had embroidered while in Japan. See McGregor’s letter on page 14.