

LTJG Victor Scherrer LCI-1021

Biography

By Victor Scherrer

During my junior year at Berea College which I had attended since 1939, I began to wonder about my future. As a physics major, if I applied to graduate school, I could receive a deferment from military duty. But there was an attractive alternative, and that was to sign up for the Navy V7 program. The Navy realized that the war would be long and they would need more officers than Annapolis could provide and they started the V7 program. In that program, you could graduate before entering Midshipman's school and receiving a commission. I signed up for that program.

Soon after graduating from Berea, I was sent a railway ticket, and subway passes to take me first to New York City then to the Midshipman's school at Columbia University along with orders to report for duty. At Columbia University, the Midshipmen occupied a former dormitory called John Jay Hall. I was checked into a room where I stayed for the night.

WORLD WAR II AND MY MILITARY SERVICE

The next day we had physicals and were issued Midshipman uniforms, toiletries etc. I saw my old friends from Berea who had just checked in. There was a large paved open space in front of the building that was used for assembly and parade type reviews on Saturday.

Classes started immediately for everyone. But for me, things were about to change. There was a shortage of engineering Midshipmen in our class and since I was a physicist, the director decided that I could handle the engineering load. The engineering school was on the old battleship Illinois renamed the Prairie State that was tied up to a dock on the Hudson River at the foot of 125th street. It had been remodeled to have a large bunk room, classrooms, kitchen, dining room and a large space that had multiple uses such as assembly after reveille in the morning. There were about 100 Midshipmen in the engineering school. The ship was tied up to a

dock in the Hudson River at the end of 125th street. That street was the commercial area that served the mostly negro part of Manhattan known as Harlem.

In the bunk room, there were double decker bunks. I shared a bunk above by a midshipman named Pokinghorn. He was also a physicist, and a graduate of California polytechnic Institute and had participated in track and field just like I did, but he had taken many more engineering courses than I. He was also in ROTC, so marching was ok with him. His academic program was almost all engineering while I was taking mostly liberal arts courses like Physics, astronomy history, religion philosophy etc. I was at a tremendous disadvantage, because most of the Midshipmen were from famous Engineering schools like Georgia Tech. Cal Tech etc. That meant that they had been in ROTC and were proficient in marching drill, and other military training, while I had never marched, and it was difficult to keep in step. The same goes for the engineering courses. The result was that many times, on weekends when the other Midshipmen could respond to the many offers and visit families in plush homes on Long Island, I had to stay aboard and study.

My bunkmate Pokinghorn invited me to go running with him one Saturday after our weekly military review. From Prairie State which was tied up at the foot of 125th street, we ran down that street to the end. The community around 125th street is known as Harlem. At that time there were many night clubs along 125th street and many famous all black bands performed there. They were so good that most of the visitors were white, thus choosing Harlem over Times Square and other New York night spots. At the other end of the street, we turned around and ran back to the Prairie State.

Sometime during the four-month term of the Midshipman's School, there were race riots in Harlem. There were many fires and injuries. We were on standby to help but the riots were contained by other mostly local government authorities.

We had marching drills on the dock for an hour each weekday. We had small boat training in the Hudson River three days a week. The rowing in the crew was kind of fun.

On Saturday morning we marched about five miles from the Prairie State to Columbia University where we had inspection and review. We marched in review on the open space next to the John Jay Hall. We marched up Broadway from the Prairie State to Columbia University.

We attracted quite a bit of attention to the people who lived in those high-rise apartments along Broadway. People came to their windows to watch when we went marching by singing Anchors Aweigh, Navy hymns and some other saltier Navy songs. The same happened during the march back to the Prairie State.

We marched up Broadway again on Sunday evening, this time to go to church. We marched this time to the beautiful Riverside Church, which was also about five miles but this time partly up Riverside Drive. The church was on a beautiful site high above and overlooking the Hudson River.

Sometime during the school term, an LCI tied up at our dock. The LCI was a landing craft that normally had a crew of 35 enlisted personnel and four officers, a captain, executive officer, an engineering/ Supply officer, and an officer responsible for communications. During operations it could carry a company of Marines or Army Troops which normally had 200 members. It had a shallow draft of 4-5 ft. It could land on almost any beach and discharge the troops. There were two side ramps to facilitate discharging the troops. When the LCI began its approach to the beach a heavy special type of anchor was dropped and deployed during the approach. Then when the LCI was ready to withdraw from the beach it was pulled, primarily by a powerful winch which rolled up the cable and pulled in the anchor thus pulling it off the beach.

In some cases, the LCI would get stuck on the beach. That was bad news if it was under fire. In that case, engine power was used with the winch to wiggle it and usually ease it off. If it was stuck beyond those operations, it had to wait for a tug.

The Prairie State Midshipmen were given a tour of the LCI. I remember saying "I hope that I never have duty on one of those". In fact, that is why the Navy was showing it to us. The deck officer candidate Midshipman at Columbia University were

probably not shown it because many of them might be assigned to other amphibious craft such as LCT's LCM's, LST's or large combat ships.

One weekend I managed to take a trip to Kingston, N.Y. to see my brother George and his wife Kathleen who I and most others called Kitty. George and Kitty had dated at Berea where they were in the same class and were married soon after graduation. It was good to see the family after the intense operations in Midshipman's School.

George had accepted a position with The Hercules Powder co. located in Port Ewen, near Kingston, N.Y. where they lived, as a research physicist. George was working on a very secret project along with scientists in other labs around the US. He was working on the development of the proximity fuse. Many scientists say that it was the most important scientific development of the war. Radar and cracking the German code were right up there also.

One Saturday I went sightseeing downtown. I saw Normandie. The Normandie was a super deluxe French ocean liner that in the pre-war period provided passenger service between the U.S. and Europe. During the war France offered it to be a troop ship for taking American soldiers to England. The conversion work was to be carried out alongside a dock on the Hudson River. Before work began all furniture and accessories were removed and put into storage for future use on the Normandie. During the refurbishment, there was an accident and the ship caught fire and capsized alongside the dock in the Hudson River. The ship was later scrapped but the furnishings were sold at auction. Later, after Sallie and I were married and were first furnishing an apartment we were able to buy two lounge chairs from Normandie at a bargain price.

Graduation time at Midshipman School was approaching, and I knew that I was going to graduate all right, because the tailor came around to measure us for our officer's uniforms and I was not excluded. This time we had to pay for our own uniforms and the price was high. We had two of each uniform. There was black dress with black shoes for winter, white dress with white shoes for

summer and grey work uniforms also to be used with black shoes, Two hats one with bill: one fore & aft style. There were emblems and accessories along with a large carrying bag. When graduation time came around, we received our commissions aboard the Prairie State before the graduation ceremony. When the time came for the graduation ceremony, we started the long march downtown to The Cathedral of St John the Divine where the graduation ceremony was to be held. The cathedral was very impressive inside and outside. The ceremony was also very impressive, but we did not throw our hats into the air like they do at Annapolis Midshipman Graduations.

Before I arrived home, I was thinking about some things that I would like to do during my leave. It was late October, so that presented some limitations on what I could do. I had never done any ballroom dancing in my life, so I decided to take dancing lessons. There was an Arthur Murray Dance Studio in Dayton, so that is where I enrolled. I had a young and attractive girl for an instructor. She was also an exceptionally good instructor. tem One day while I was in Dayton, I went to a photo studio and had my picture taken in officer's work uniform. The town of Miamisburg had a Municipal Building that was for recreational activities. There they maintained a dance floor and had Saturday night dances. They had a local dance band that was rather good, and it was well attended by people from the town and a large surrounding area, so I decided to go one Saturday night.

I did not see any men that I knew. I surmised that the men that I attended school with were all in the military service and away from home. Every Saturday Night Miamisburg held social dancing in the Town Hall. I danced with some single girls that were there.

Sallie was working in an aircraft factory in Buffalo, N.Y. at that time, so I did not see her. Sallie was an inspector working at Bell Aircraft Corporation where they made a fighter plane, the P38 (Lightning). They were used mostly in the Pacific Theater of war and I saw plenty of them there later. Sallie was still very anxious to go to medical school. She hoped that by working at a

place where she could make good money, she would save enough to accomplish that. I knew that if she were accepted and attended medical school, she would not marry me. In any case, since I knew that I would be in dangerous places, it would not be fair to marry anyone until after the war.

I made a train trip to Corbin, Kentucky to visit a Nurse by the name of who I knew at Berea and was working there as a County Health Nurse. We went to see the falls and have dinner at Cumberland Falls State Park. I would see during my leave after she went on duty as an Army Flight Nurse and was stationed at Patterson Field Air Base near Dayton. She was assigned to be a nurse on evacuation flights from Europe to the U.S. The crew consisted of a Pilot, a Co-piolet, a Navigator, and a Flight Nurse. They were busy because the United States 8th Air Force was taking very heavy loses and the most severely injured were flown directly to Rome Air Base in New York State. She later married the Navigator of the crew in which she served.

My orders were to report to the Navy unit at Pennsylvania State University. I traveled by train from Miamisburg to Altoona, Pennsylvania. From there I took the bus to State College, the town where Penn. State is located. When I checked in, I was assigned a roommate named Ensign Warren Rudd and we were assigned a room together in the Nittney Lion Inn. That inn was on the campus and was operated by the University. We had a good living allowance and could afford to join a private club that was adjacent to the campus, for our meals, so our living accommodation was incredibly good.

We had a busy academic program, and we did not have to march. Our marching days in the Navy were over. We did have to take lifesaving three days per week.

There was ample time for social activities. We were extremely popular on the campus. Several Sororities invited us to dance parties. I remember attending one. I remember that the Broadway play Oklahoma was extremely popular then and you would hear music from it everywhere, especially at the dining club. It was made into a movie, and it

was one of my all-time favorites. I will talk about seeing it later.

IN UNIFORM AT PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

At Penn. State University, the naval officers were assigned lodging at the Nittney Lion Inn, a hotel that was on the campus and was operated by the university. I had a roommate named Warren Rudd

The classes that we attended were slanted mostly toward diesel engines, their design, maintenance, and operation. Some like lubricants were very practical.

In the spring, our tour of duty at Penn. State ended and I received orders to report to the Underway Training Center at Solomons Island



and he was from Minnesota. We got along very well together. As officers, we were receiving enough pay that we could afford to have our meals at a private club that was conveniently located adjacent to the campus. The officers were extremely popular on the campus and we were invited to many parties that were sponsored by student organizations on the campus. At least one of our groups met his future wife at such a party.

Maryland. Solomen Island was a picturesque small island that was located about fifty miles from Washington, D.C. on the Chesapeake Bay. When I checked in, I was told that I would meet the LCI crew that I would be associated with later and that we would be obtaining underway training on board an LCI there with an experienced crew that had operated in the European theater of the war.

The trip from Washington D.C. was on an old commercial bus over poor roads, but Solomons would later become a major resort town and have particularly good access. Sallie

The next day I met my future crew members. The captain was a Lt who was previously an accountant from Great Falls, Montana. His name was Kornfeld. He received his training at the Officers Training School in Up State New York. The Executive Officer was Wally Buitner. He had the rank of Ensign. Wally was what was called a Mustang. A Mustang was an officer who was previously an enlisted seaman who through exceptional service was promoted to be an officer without going to Midshipman School or Officer Training School. The Signal Officer was Ensign, John B. Swift who the officers all called JB He was a graduate of The Georgia Tech School of Engineering and was very savvy. He had R.O.T.C. there .

When our crew assembled, and everybody became well acquainted, I met separately with the men who I would supervise. The chief motor machinist mate was a congenial fellow. He had previous experience on an Lci in a combat area. His name was Deemer. The second machinist mate was older than most of the crew and was very experienced in working on automobile and truck engines. Most of those trucks had diesel engines. He was a most valuable man to me. His name was Bielsky and he was from New Jersey. The next machinist in line had some experience, and the third was a pure rookie; he had no experience.

During beaching operations, I would oversee the Machinist mate operating the rear anchor winch combination, and during general quarters, I would supervise the two rear 20mm guns The Lci had four 20 mm guns, two located on the forward upper deck and two on the rear upper deck. General Quarters meant going to battle stations.

After all the crew became acquainted, we were briefed on the training that we were going to receive for the next two weeks, and we then boarded the training LCI. This craft had seen much previous service and the training crew was very experienced.

We cruised the Chesapeake Bay Day and Night from the Susquehanna River on the north to the Atlantic Ocean on the South. Night operations were important so that our navigators would be able to navigate on the open ocean at night. Both Wally and JB would become proficient at that. During the day we would stop and practice docking. That was mostly for the captain. Then we could go ashore for a couple of hours.

In the engine room my men would become proficient at the operation of the propulsion system. The craft was powered by eight large, heavy duty diesel truck engines. Each of the two propellers were powered by four engines geared together in what was called a Quad. Each Quad operated with a choice of one to four engines. Thereby operation was still possible if any engines failed. In addition to that versatility the operator on the bridge could vary the propeller pitch. That was most useful when pulling off a beach. We did not practice any landing on beaches. That would come later when we had our own Lci. We did practice landing and tying up at docks. Then we could go ashore for an hour or two

. We made one such stop at Tangier Island. Tangier Island was long a very isolated place. For many years, they were almost completely isolated from the mainland which was about twenty miles to an isolated place on shore. It was first settled by just a few English families soon after John Smith made his exploratory trip up the Chesapeake from Jamestown in the 1600's.

We made some other stops that included Crisfield and Cambridge. They were all interesting. Later in the 1970's Sallie and I would attend an Elderhostel in Crisfield in which we learned about the long history of the town and the surrounding countryside. I will describe that later. By the end of the first week, our crew was becoming proficient. We went back to the base at Solomons Island and liberty was given for the weekend.

Another officer that I knew in Midshipman School and at Penn State, J.T. York, was in training on another LCI, and he and I got together, and decided to go into Washington to go sightseeing

together. been to Washington except to go through the train station on our trip to Solomons Island.

Back at the base, we prepared for our last week of training. It was partly a repeat of the previous week. We visited some more towns on Chesapeake. I remember passing another Navy training base for LST's somewhere near Norfolk.

Back at the base, we prepared for the long trip across the U.S. It was a Navy bus to Union Station located in DC, where we boarded a train for Chicago. My recollection is that the entire crew occupied one Pullman car and we had our meals in the dining car. In Chicago we were transported by Navy bus from the Grand Central station to the one where The Great Northern Railway was located. We had similar accommodations on the Great Northern railway. Our trip to Portland Oregon took several days.

In Portland, a bus took us to LCI 1021 which was in a shipbuilding facility on the Columbia River. The shipyard was a short walk to the main business district.

Construction on the 1021 was not quite finished, but our Quarters were all ready. Navy inspectors were



OFFICERS OF LCI 1021

supervising the construction, so we were able to spend our time learning the ship. In the evenings, we were able to go ashore and recreate. Finally, we took on supplies and food and prepared to get underway.



OFFICERS AND CREW OF LCI 1021

We had a river pilot aboard to guide us down to the mouth of the Columbia River. It was a beautiful trip down the great Columbia. When we reached the mouth of the river, the pilot left us, and we were on our own for the first time. As we entered the Pacific, we had heavy seas. I immediately found out that I would have a problem with sea sickness when we were on the ocean with rough water. Even so, I still had to take my turn with four watches when we were under way. I could eat if I were off duty and could lay in my bunk for a while after eating. I spent most of my free time there. Fortunately, rough seas were not common in the Pacific, and during operations we would be in calm channels etc. during many of our operations.

After leaving the Columbia, we proceeded down the coast to San Diego, keeping in sight of land

much of the time, thus making the navigating easy for Wally.

In the San Diego area, we proceeded through the harbor to the Navy Base. We would continue our training operations from there for a while. Each day we would go out to sea to practice beach landings. The beaches were near Coronado and were the most beautiful beaches that we would ever land on. These beaches were very good to practice on.

One day as a supply officer, I had to go to the Navy airfield to check out a camera and film. I spent most of the day doing that. When I returned, I found out that our captain Lt Kornfeld was going to be very aloof, even with the officers. He took charge of the camera, which was supposed to be used for photographing the crew and other events of interest, but instead he kept it practically unused.

When we were at the dock, we were free to go out at night. I discovered that a Berea College nurse was stationed at the Naval Hospital and had dinner with her at the Officers Club a couple of times.

Our day operations soon changed, and we were making daily trips to Oceanside where we would pick up a company of Marines and practice landings with them. We also had gunnery practice, shooting at a target towed by a small plane. We also met up with the two other LCI's that composed our group. The group commander and his staff were not aboard one of those.

Soon we would begin our journey to Hawaii and to the Navy base at Pearl Harbor. We were the lead ship in the convoy because our captain was senior in rank to the other captains.

When we arrived in Pearl Harbor, it was so quiet that it was hard to imagine that a tremendous attack ever took place there. Still, if you looked carefully, you could see the remains of sunken ships. We would anchor in an outer lagoon away from the battle wreckage.

We would be at Pearl Harbor for a couple of months. I do not know why we were there so long; it probably was due to planning the future operations. Sometimes, when we were together, the three LCI'S would tie up together in what we called

nesting. During those times, the diesel auxiliary engines would keep running and the diesel smoke would be partially trapped between two craft. In the hot climate the officers would have to keep their portholes Open. The fumes were hard to take and very unhealthy.

We did not have a lot to do at Pearl Harbor. We had to go into the shop for some outfitting and we had taken on supplies, water, and ammunition. The officers were able to go ashore a lot. We enjoyed visiting The Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki that the Navy had taken over for submariners to have R&R. We ate at The Moana Hotel WHERE THE Hawaiian style food was delicious. And really enjoyed the fresh fruits, especially the pineapple. By this time, I was able to evaluate our situation and form my own opinion of what my life was going to be like in the future.

The Quarters were cramped. The crew of 35 men all slept together in one compartment; they also all ate together in one space. The officers each had a small stateroom. I think that the captains was a little larger. The officers had a porter who served meals and cleaned our rooms, but we ate the same food as the Crew. The LCI did not make fresh water like larger ships. Therefore, the only time that anyone could take a hot shower with fresh water was when we were in port tied up at a dock that had a freshwater connection. At sea, we could only take cold saltwater showers. They were not too bad when you got used to them.

Life on an LCI was very dull. We got a little news. I had subscribed to the pony edition of Time Magazine which the Armed Services Mail Service delivered regularly. They kept track of where we were and always sent our mail to our next port. As far as I know, I was the only one on board who had the foresight to do that. But I was shortsighted on something else and that was not buying a camera. There were many events that I would like to have pictures of. Everyone was always anxiously waiting for me to finish my Time Magazine. I usually started giving it to J.B. Swift Of course, we all received mail and were able to write home. My letters were from Sallie. Sallie had also given me a picture of her, and I enjoyed carrying it. We had a

ships radio, but it was strictly for official use only. I guess that the person whose company that I enjoyed the most, was J.B. Swift. We had similar backgrounds in engineering, and we enjoyed going ashore together, which we did a lot.

One job that we officers had to do that I disliked very much was censoring mail. We had to read and approve every letter that was mailed. We had to read every letter carefully, and we knew everything about every enlisted man on the LCI. We were careful to share that duty equally.

We had a good crew with some veterans from other campaigns 'in the European Theater, but some were from earlier campaigns in the Pacific Area. and most were very cooperative. I got to know most of them very well. We had a particularly good Pharmacist. We had great confidence in him. I do not know if the captain knew, but the other officers knew, and all the crew knew that he was an alcoholic and he had a key to the medical locker where the alcohol was stored. We all just tolerated it. If the captain knew, he never disclosed the fact. I was very fond of my fellow officers, even though the Captain was still aloof.

When we finally left Pearl Harbor it was to go to a site in Honolulu that was right downtown in a small harbor called The Kawala Basin. We tied up at a dock that was right at the main shopping center. I think that the idea was to give our crews shore liberty in a nice place before we left for the war zone. It would be the last such liberty that they would have for a long, long time. The officers had some time ashore also. After the first night at the Kawala Basin when we awoke the next morning, the craft was listing very badly to the ocean side. The captain came to me to find out what was wrong. When I looked, I found that we were sitting on the bottom and it sloped away from the dock.

We had our orders to go to the sea. We were headed for Milne Bay on the island of New Guiana. Milne Bay was a major Naval Base in that area. I could tell by our progression that we were staging a major operation somewhere.

We used the same formation of the three LCI'S as before with the 1021 in the lead. Our course would

take us far south out of the area where the Japanese were operating. Everything was uneventful until late one night when I was the officer of the deck, I saw the Great Barrier Reef dead ahead. I woke the captain and he had Wally navigate around it. We passed by Guadalcanal where the Marines were still involved in mop-up operations.

At Milne Bay we found out that we would become the amphibious part of the Seventh Fleet. The Seventh Fleet was what General MacArthur referred to as "My Navy". General MacArthur had been conducting a new tactic of bypassing the enemy, isolating him, and gradually subduing him. The tactic was said to be "brilliant", and we were going to be a big part of it. I saw what I thought was MacArthur's headquarters high on a hill and I met an army WAC who confirmed it. It was nice to get some fresh water, so we could take freshwater showers. After a few days at Milne Bay, we followed the shoreline to Finchhaven that had been recently invaded and mostly secured by the Army, but the Japanese were still active outside the defense perimeter. After a couple of days, we went on to Hollandia which had also been recently secured. We stayed there a couple of days. We were able to go ashore there to see movies at night. Even though the base had been secured, we had to carry side-arms for safety because the Japs were very near-by. Then we traveled to an Atoll named Manus. It had a large lagoon. And for the first time we saw a large assembly of warships. The entire Seventh fleet was anchored there complete with Battleships, Cruisers Destroyers and Amphibious Ships. There were no Aircraft Carriers.

An invasion Fleet was being assembled for invading the Philippines. The invasion was to be in Leyte Gulf at the village of Tacloban. I noticed in the news lately that Tacloban has since grown into a large city and it was damaged by two Typhoons that have devastated the area in a recent two-year period.

We were not going to be in the first wave of the invasion but would follow about a week later. The invasion was successful and General MacArthur waded ashore soon thereafter and stated, "I Have Returned". When we made the trip to Leyte Gulf, it

was uneventful for the three LCI's of our group. I don't recall being escorted by any fighting ships. Upon arrival, our first task was to make smoke at night. We had a large smoke generator on board and we would cruise around the harbor at night making a cloud of smoke to hide the large number of cargo ships there. There would be Japanese scout planes flying around at night trying to find out what was going on. Sometimes they would come down extremely low to get pictures. We also had PBY flying boats up there and sometimes they would shoot down a Japanese Scout plane. One night I was sitting in the conning tower and a Jap. Scout Plane came down so low that I think that I could have shot it down if I had had my "45" but I did not have it. During the day, the Japanese were starting to use their "Kamikaze" pilots to dive into ships. They wouldn't use one on an LCI unless it was loaded with troops or tied to another ship, so when we later went out on missions with troops, we kept them hidden during the day. A friend of mine was engineering officer aboard another LCI was killed when the LCI was tied up to a large supply ship and it was hit by a "Kamikaze". The suicide planes were used more for the seventh Fleet which was at sea nearby and the third fleet with aircraft carriers which was operating further North. I have a friend who graduated from Berea College in my class who also went to Midshipman's school with me and was stationed on a destroyer. They were stationed as a picket ship with the third fleet. He said that the Third Fleet was attacked several times by kamikaze's and they were never hit but other picket ships were. He said that they did have several close calls.

We carried out several one-day missions taking Army troops to different spots on the island of Leyte to carry out MacArthur's style of warfare. We kept landing Army troops to the rear of the Japanese on Leyte. During these operations, we always kept the troops well hidden. AS we were carrying out these little operations, there were two giant naval battles brewing.

The Japanese had formed most of their Naval Warships into two fleets. The main fleet that included all the Aircraft Carriers was going to come through the Central Philippines just south of Luzon

and the other would come through a southern passage south of Leyte through the Suragiao Channel. They hoped to converge on Leyte Gulf from two sides and surprise the Seventh Fleet. It was a big gamble for the Japanese because we had air superiority both on land with the two engine "Lightning" fighter planes and at sea with carrier-based aircraft. We also had particularly good intelligence gained from scout planes.

The northern Japanese Fleet was met by the American Third Fleet, which had all our Carriers. That Japanese Fleet had to retreat after suffering heavy losses. The Southern Japanese Fleet was met by the US 7th fleet and it was caught by a classic maneuver: "Crossing the T". That maneuver gave the Seventh Fleet a position for superior firepower and many Japanese Battleships and Cruisers were sunk and the beach head on Leyte was saved.

The LCI with its shallow draft could go between islands in shallow channels. That way we were able to use the McArthur technique to carry out many small operations to the other islands. Most of these operations were unopposed. When we had an unopposed landing, we would meet the residents and bargain with them for war souvenirs. They had lots of worthless Japanese money to trade. Also, J.B and I would go ashore to meet with residents.

Sometimes, if the Army knew that the landing would be resisted, they would change clothes from casual fatigues to battle gear and would leave their fatigues behind. That gave us a lot of trading material. I had a particularly good collection including a Japanese Officers Sword, and I valued my collection. When we were back at Leyte, I went to the post office to mail my collection, but it never arrived home. That was a failure the Army postal Service .

On one operation, our LCI operating alone made an unopposed landing in the island of Panay near the capital city of ILO ILO. J.B. Swift And I as usual went sightseeing in the capitol city. We toured a historic Catholic Cathedral and met a friendly gentleman who happened to be a schoolteacher. He invited us to his home for dinner and we accepted. The dinner was incredibly good, and he gave us

souvenirs that were the best. They were paintings that he had painted. I carried them all the way home.

We carried out many small unopposed operations throughout the islands. One operation that was opposed was a large one on Luzon just south of Manila. That force of Army troops advanced and were the southern part of a coordinated attack from both north and south and it successfully liberated the city of Manilla.

As the Philippine campaign was winding down, we started taking Philippine Gorilla fighters' home from different locations where they had been fighting. We made one such trip to Zamboanga on the island of Mindanao. And I went ashore there but found the area less developed and the natives less friendly.

Sometime during the Philippine Campaign, I received a promotion to Lt (Jg), along with campaign ribbons and battle stars.

Another such trip was much more interesting. We had two LCI's each carrying a full load of Gorillas home to an island named Mambahao. The island was located right in the middle of the Saragasso Sea where the big battle with the Seventh Fleet Crossed the T took place. In that battle, the Japanese fleet took heavy loses and retreated westward. Those people had a front row seat to the battle. The two LCI's unloaded their passengers and were greeted by a gentleman who said that he owned the entire island. He was born in the Philippines and emigrated to the United States where he was a musician with a big-name band. He saved his money and when he returned home, he bought the island. He invited the Officers to dinner. He lived in a nice, large house. He had a pretty wife and two beautiful daughters. It was a wonderful dinner after all the "spam" meals that we had been having.

The Philippine campaign was essentially over. There were always Japanese hold outs in hiding, but they were not a huge threat. Meanwhile we had received our sealed orders for the invasion of Japan. We knew that it would be a dangerous mission. The Japanese had saved most of their Kamikaze pilots

for that battle. And they had heavily fortified their entire coastline.

As it turned out, those days were my last on the LCI. Somewhere I had eaten some contaminated food, and I had contracted Amebic Dysentery. I had to leave the LCI 1021. It was

a sad occasion when I had to leave my friends that I had been through the War with. I never knew what happened to them. I heard that after the war they were assigned to go help the Chinese on the Yanksee River before they turned the 1021 over to the Chinese and could go home.

I was taken to an Army hospital on Leyte Island near Tacloban. It was an open tent and I was well isolated. The United States dropped both atomic Bombs and the war ended while I was there. Dropping the Bomb Probably saved my life because we had sealed orders for the invasion of Japan. The invasion would involve much loss of life especially for landing craft because the Japanese coast was well fortified, and they had saved many Kamikazes for the invasion. When I recovered, I was given orders to return home for thirty days leave and then report back to active duty. I was disappointed at that, but I knew that it was not easy for the Navy to unwind from all its operations and continue as a formidable force, because there were still major problems in the World, and we needed to maintain a strong Navy. The trip home was fast and easy. I shared a stateroom on a fast troop ship. And I had a Pullman on the train from San Diego. When I arrived home, everyone was shocked at how skinny I was.

I was a hero in town. My old boss at the foundry, Mr. Barry, invited me to speak at the Rotary Club. I went to the Saturday Night Dance in town. But the best thing that happened was that Sallie invited me to visit her and her family in Garrett, KY. I took the train most of the way. Sallie and her sister Inez met me in Allen, Ky. That was as far as passenger trains operated on that route. I think that Inez really liked me because she was very quick to volunteer to pick me up. She was married to Marrow Cox who was also in the Navy. She and her son, Sonny, had lived with her parents while Marrow was away on duty with the Navy in the Pacific.

Sallie was also shocked at how skinny I was. Garrett was a mining town from which the major mines had closed and moved further up the valley. Sallie had to tell me about what it was like when the mines in Garrett were active. I met the rest of Sallie's family and was quite impressed.

Sallie and I had a good time together. We attended several local events After my visit to Sallie's home, I decided that she was the one that I wanted to marry.

Back Home, I finished my leave and traveled by train to New York where I received further orders to join the group staff on an LST. I was to travel by train to San Diego and board a transport ship bound for Saipan in the Marianas. The trip to San Diego was uneventful and it was over a route that I had never traveled, and that was enjoyable. The ship was at the dock when I arrived, and I went aboard. I would be sharing a stateroom again. There was a movie in town that I dearly wanted to see, so I asked the Executive Officer how long it would take to finish loading. He told me that it would take at least four more hours to finish loading. I talked another Jr passenger officer into going back ashore to see the movie Oklahoma. He agreed, and we went ashore and saw the movie, which we both thoroughly enjoyed. When we arrived back at the dock, the ship was gone, and I had everything that I owned aboard that ship. The Dock master contacted the ship and it was about 20 miles out to sea. The captain agreed to wait while a Navy taxi took us out. The captain was very unhappy, and he assigned us to deck duty for the entire trip.

It was a long non-stop trip to Sipan. When we arrived LST 683 to which I was assigned, was not there. I would have to wait a few days until it arrived. It had been operating in the European Theater and was being shifted to the Pacific. I checked into the Officers' Quarters. At dinner, the first night I met Mary, the Navy Nurse who I had last seen in San Diego. She invited me to go on a picnic with her. She took me to a beautiful beach where we had a swim and a nice lunch.

After a few days, LST 683 arrived and I reported aboard. The 683 was the flagship of a group that was mostly still in Europe. I reported to

Commander Tutt who would be my superior for the future. He was the Group Commander and I was assigned to his staff as the engineering officer. He was an interesting person. He was very gung-ho. He was a former Chief Petty Officer who was decorated for diving and repairing a propeller while his Lst was on the beach at Anzio and under enemy fire. Anzio was less than 100 miles from Rome. It is not generally known, but Anzio was probably the bloodiest battle of the European war. He was rewarded with a commission and a promotion to full commander. I respected him, and he seemed to like me ok.

We were loading up to take munitions to Chang Kai-shek who was fighting a losing battle against the Communists in China. There were to be two stops: one at a US Navy base at Sing Tao; the other was a city that then was named Tientsin.

We finished loading about 5:00 pm. The captain wanted to wait until the next morning to leave because it would be more dangerous to go at night. We had a load of dangerous munitions and a recent typhoon had caused many mines to be cast adrift in the East China Sea. Commander Tutt ordered that we leave as soon as possible. Old 683 had seen much service and was getting old. When we went to pull up the ramp and close the bow doors they did not operate. The Commander asked that I help the ships Engineering Officer to solve the problem I did not know anything about LST's, but I could read wiring diagrams, so together we solved the problem. So, with posted lookouts for mines, we made the trip to Tsingtao all right. There was a large well protected harbor there, and we unloaded expeditiously. We did not even go ashore.

So, it was on to Tientsin with the rest of the load. Tientsin was far inland, and we had to go about 100 miles up a river. It was no problem since the Lst had a very shallow draft. Commander Tutt decided that we would spend some time in this city. It was modern, had particularly good shopping and unbelievably low prices. Commander Tutt bought his wife a mink coat. I bought a hand decorated Kimono for Sallie. I bought some other things, but they were stolen from me before I left the store.

The trip back to Saipan was uneventful and I felt better without the munitions on board. There was one nice thing about traveling on an LST when it was empty. The lower cargo deck, which we called the tank deck was large and we had a basketball court set up on the tank deck. We could choose sides and have pick-up games there. There was only one problem; the shallow draft made the LST pitch and roll so much that it was awfully hard to hit a long basket so it was mostly lay-ups.

Back at Saipan we loaded up again, this time with food and other supplies that were destined for the Marines in Okinawa. The trip was uneventful, but I was shocked when we arrived to see all the damage from the recent typhoon. Cargo shops were scattered all over the beaches. The fighting ships were able to depart and ride out the storm at sea. We beached to unload there and had no problems.

Back at Saipan, we loaded again to take a load of supplies to Iwo Jima. The trip was uneventful. We unloaded at the beach but did not go ashore. It was hard to believe that 5000 marines died in one day on that beach during the invasion.

When we returned to Saipan again it was for the last time. We loaded up surplus equipment, mostly electronics and headed for home. It was a long, slow journey. We had a stop at Pearl Harbor where we stayed for a couple of days. During that stay, I had a chance to go shopping at the Navy Store and bought a Pearl Necklace to give to Sallie. When we finally arrived in the San Francisco Area, it was a wonderful feeling to be going under the Golden Gate Bridge. After passing under the bridge, we traveled down the San Francisco Bay to the Navy Yard at Treasure Island. We made what would be our final docking there. The 683 would be decommissioned there. The process would take about quite a while. It kept us busy during the day, but we were able to go into the city every night. I saw a lot of San Francisco. One night I went to the theater to see the play "Harvey" the movie star Joe E. Brown played the single part. I expected to be released from active duty after the decommissioning, but I was in for a surprise. I do not know, but I suspect that Commander Tutt might

have been behind what happened. I was given orders to report to the Navy Underway Training Center in San Diego. Commander Tutt was a regular Navy and a “mustang”. It would take something special for him to keep his rank. He thought that if I went down there, I could put in a good word for him, and he could request and maybe get a transfer there.

I went down there, but it was a terrible job .After a while, along with my lack of enthusiasm, they sent me to the Great Lakes Naval Base in Chicago for release to inactive duty. That was in July,1945.

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