World War II's Greatest Amphibious Forces

A COAST GUARDSMAN'S STORY

Capturing Amphibious Landings from the Mediterranean to Normandy

William D. Elder


ATLANTIC OCEAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
BAY OF BISCAY
ENGLISH CHANNEL
TYRRHENIAN SEA
IONIAN SEA
ADRIATIC SEA
LIGURIAN SEA
ENGLAND
FRANCE
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
GERMANY
BELGIUM
NETHERLANDS
SWITZERLAND
AUSTRIA
ITALY
CZECH REP.
SLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
POLAND
CROATIA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
YUGOSLAVIA
SLOVENIA
MONACO
ANDORRA
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
MALTA
CORSICA (Fr.)
SARDINIA (It.)
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WORLD WAR II'S
GREATEST AMPHIBIOUS FORCES
A COAST GUARDSMAN'S STORY

William D. Elder

From the Mediterranean Sea Operations "Torch" Tunisia, "Husky" Sicily, "Avalanche" Italy, to the World's Greatest Amphibious Force, "Overlord" Normandy, France,
1943-44

2nd revision

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A naval history of amphibious beach landing operations in the World War II European Theater.

I herewith give the full titles of the monographs, the principle sources drawn upon, including drawn sketch maps and pictures, which this manuscript cites herein and noted in the index.

For My Daughter, Billee K. Elder Altman
and her family

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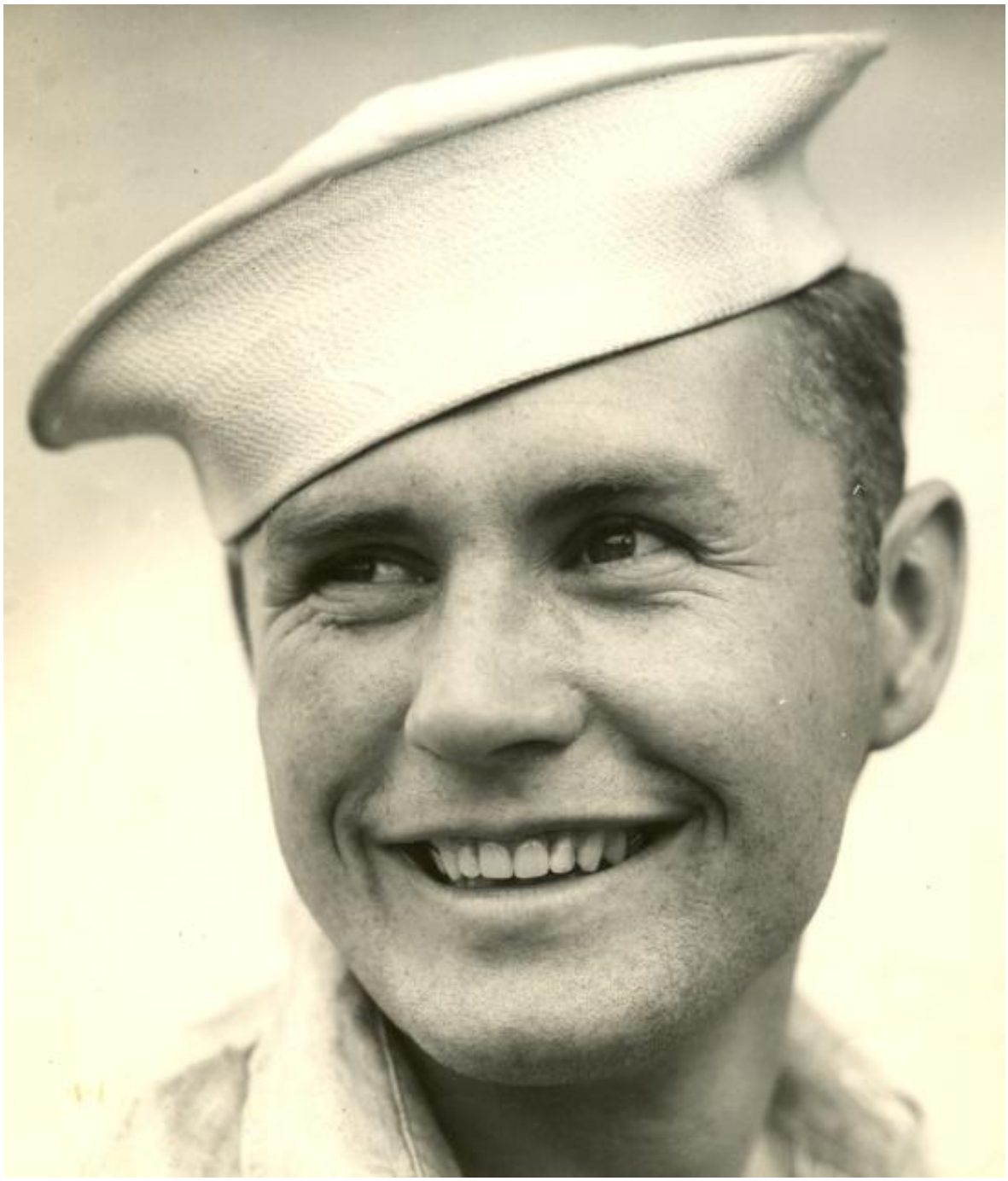
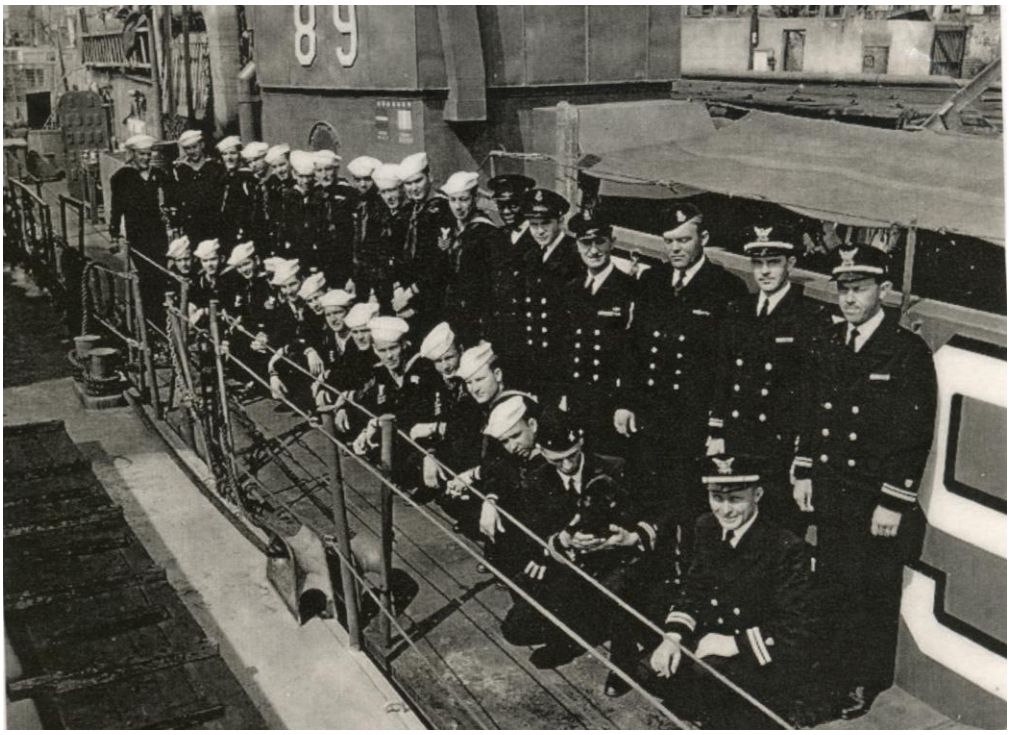


Serving with a Coast Guard LCI Flotilla in the mighty Allied drive on Nazi-held France, Coast Guardsman William D. Elder, boatswain's mate first class, of 176 Kendall Avenue, JERSEY SHORE, Pa., is participating in his fourth invasion. He served at Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy, and now France. Coast Guardsmen are serving all over the globe—on land and sea—from the European Theater to the Pacific atolls.
(Coast Guard press release)



LCI(L) 89 CREW

C.O. Edison M. Fabian, Lieut. (jg)
Exec. Harold H. Howard, Lieut. (jg)
W.O. Wilburn D. Hilton, Lieut. (jg)
Eng. Elmer Piper, Lieut. (jg)

ELDER, William D. (519-594) B.M.lc.
LEWIS, Donald E. (220-148) C.Q.M.
WRASE, John F. (545-390) S.M.lc.
CHILDERS, Billie (539-204) S.M.2c.
KARNER, Joseph K. (203-644) Cox.
HERRING, Robert E. (239-739) Cox.
KING, Wallace H. (636-127) Sea.lc.
COZZENS, John D. (558-395) S.C.3c.
MARSHALL, Warren G.H. (220-419) Sea.lc.
MC GINTY, James (517-864) Sea.2c.
POGUE, William F. (648-734) Sea.2c.
CHERVO, Jack L. (609-635) Sea.lc.
RASZERSKI, John C. (520-805) Sea.lc.
LAUVE, Curley A. (213-039) C.Mc.M.M.
MECHER, Edward R., Jr. (554-248)Mo.M.M.lc.
COPELAND, Lowell G. (586-116) Mo.MMlc
COX, Arthur F. (587-347) MoMM3c.
SCHLOCKMAN, Alex (551-999) F.lc.
MAURER, Richard B. (555-870) F.lc.
ROIG, Richard H. (206-816) C.R.M.
HALLIDAY, Audubon, Jr. (612-126) E.M.lc.
CLAYSON, Delbert L. (575-236)) Ph.M.2c.
ALSTON, Joseph J. (100-116) C.C.std.
BASS, Leroy (241-071) St.3c.
CAMPBELL, Joseph M. (517-628) C.Pho.M.
LEIDY, Wayne F. (506-833) G.M.3e.
SULLIVAN, Herschel E. (242-021) S.K.2e.
CALDWELL, Wayne P., Jr. (613-635) MeMM3c.
JOHNSON, David (7004-089) St. K.2c.

STAFF OFFICERS ON BOARD LCI(L)89

Comdr. Group 29, Aden C. Unger, Commander
Recog. Off., Charles G. Basham, Lieut. (jg)

3 May, 1944

Captain Miles H. Imlay, U.S. Coast Guard, with an aid.

THE COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
WASHINGTON 20593

13 October 2000

The Commandant of the Coast Guard takes great pleasure in presenting the COAST GUARD UNIT COMMENDATION to:

FLOTILLA 10 – GROUP 29 – DIVISION 57

for service as set forth in the following

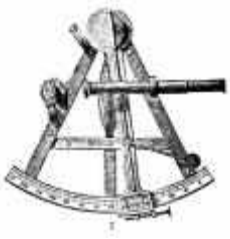
CITATION:

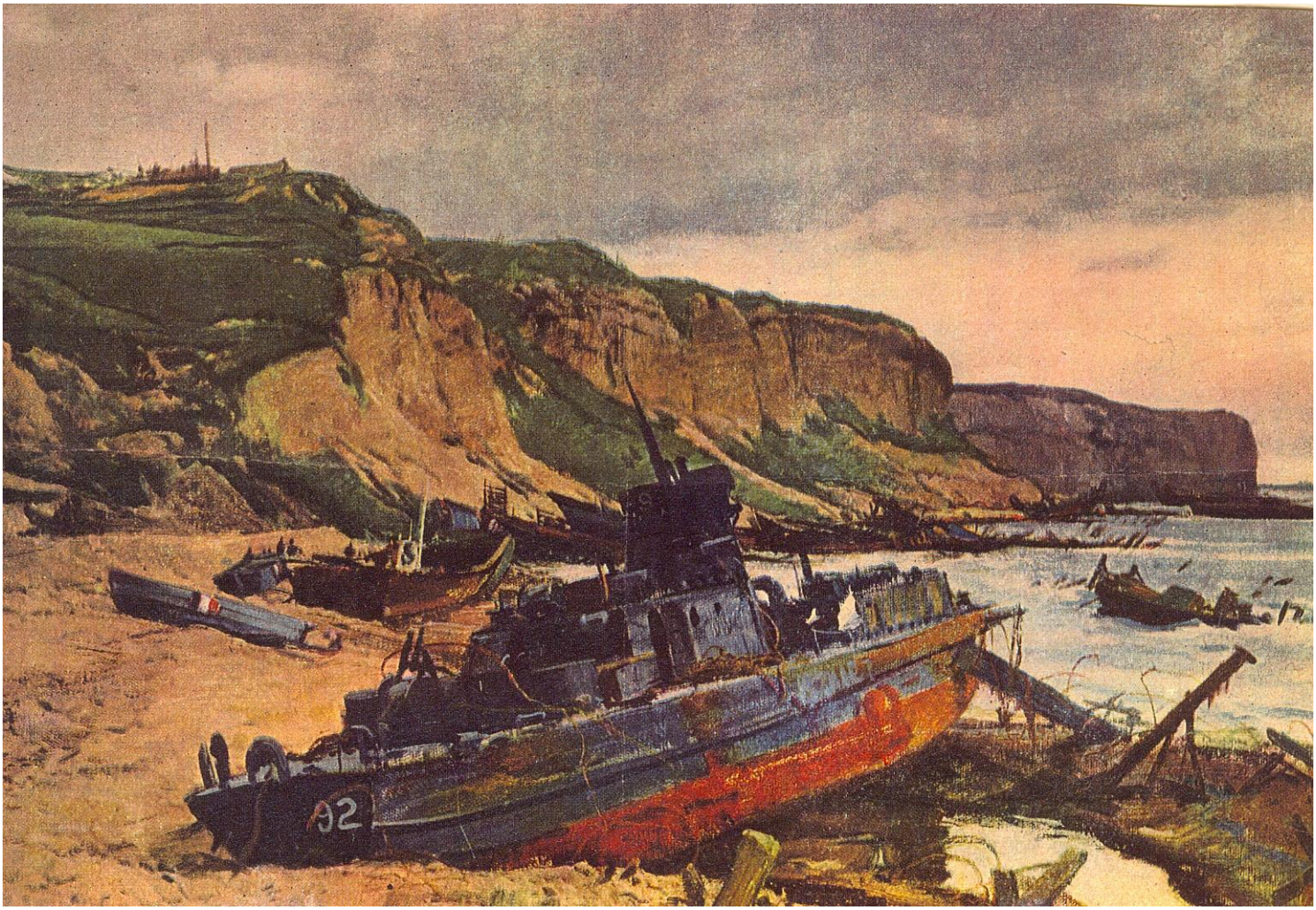
"For exceptionally meritorious service during Flotilla 10 – Group 29 – Division 57's participation in the allied force's invasion of Normandy, France on 6 June 1944. Consisting of 24 Coast Guard-manned Landing Crafts (LCI), Flotilla 10 distinguished itself in the face of heavy enemy fire in delivering hundreds of allied troops and tons of equipment to Omaha Beach at the outset of the invasion. The gallant efforts of the crews of these LCIs were key to clearing channels through minefields and hedgehogs to enable the rest of the allied force to reach the beaches. Although continually exposed to heavy gunfire, the LCIs dodged sunken obstacles and sailed through heavy seas, shuttling between the landing areas and the transport ships delivering badly needed supplies and reinforcements to the beaches. After delivering their human cargo and equipment, the LCIs served as rescue platforms, recovering and transporting injured soldiers and sailors to hospital ships off shore. Through out the invasion, 4 of the LCIs, Numbers 85, 91, 92 and 93, were lost while distinguishing themselves in the heat of battle. LCI-85 was one of the first to ram its way through sunken obstacles and successfully clear a path to the beach before being hit by an 88mm shell that penetrated the hull and exploded in the forwarded troop compartment. After unloading troops to smaller landing craft, LCI-85 stuck a mine and was simultaneously struck by 25 artillery shells. Listing badly, LCI-85 returned to CHASE and unloaded its wounded before it sank. LCI-91 and LCI-92 were both struck by German shells shortly after reaching the beach and both burst into flames. The crews fought the fires while unloading troops. These LCIs burned throughout the day, giving off thick smoke that served as a key landmark for other allied forces approaching the coast. Further down the beach, LCI-93 successfully delivered its first load of troops, but grounded on a sandbar during their second delivery and took 10 direct artillery hits. As the invasion progressed, the remaining LCIs of Flotilla 10 successfully rescued over 400 injured allied personnel. These were instrumental in the successful invasion of Normandy and in turning the tide of World War II. The dedication and devotion to duty exhibited by the crew of Flotilla 10 – Group 29 – Division 57 during this period are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

JAMES M. LOY
Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant

This book is respectfully dedicated to those U.S. Coast guardsmen who served with valor in Flotillas Four and Ten through the invasions of Sicily, Italy, and France. During the Normandy Neptune Operation we lost four vessels and several crewmen to the fierce gunfire of the German defenders on Omaha Beach. Our heraldry is overlooked, for we supported the Naval forces logistically, but we were instrumental to the successes of those invasions—a fine record for the United States' oldest continuous sea-going service. We as U.S. Coast Guardsmen should be very proud of our heritage in this wonderful country we served.

Landing Craft Infantry (Large) Flotilla Four/Ten:
LCI(L)s 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 349, and 350





Omaha Beach Painting; artist unknown

The LCI(L)92 and a few wrecked boats—remains from mines—sit heavily on the sand shore bluffs near Colleville-sur-Mer. On June 6, 1944, D-Day, Americans landed. Atop the bluffs the Germans, with concealed guns, pounded the beachhead until it became the bloodiest beach at Normandy.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have been instrumental in my writing this story of my WWII tenure. I would like to say a special "thank you" to them:

- **Mrs. Shirley Barbour,** Office Manager for the Riverside Club Condominium Association. Without her help I could not have put the first manuscript together. She transcribed my hand-written papers into the computer, keeping her cool through my changing and rewriting—my Good Girl Friday!

- **Mrs. Mary Lipstate** graciously edited the first manuscript. My debt to her is very great.

- **Mrs. Jane Bittner Schaub**, a lifelong friend, who encouraged me to write this book, and her daughter, **Mrs. Judy Murphey,** who contributed some editing. As I wrote, her mother graciously offered Judy's help.

- **Jim Finkler**, who works for the Institutional Advancement Office at my alma mater, Pennsylvania College of Technology (it was Williamsport Technical Institute when I studied Architectural Drafting there from 1947-1949). Jim has a B.A. in History, and after meeting me and hearing about my project, offered to assist with further changes and rewrites as well as the final editing of the book.

INTRODUCTION

There is traditional, historical knowledge of the landing experience under a variety of conditions in North Africa, Sicily, Salerno Italy, and Normandy France. This is the story of those landings through my own experience, drawing from the contents collected in my personal log of Ports of Call and events, personal research, books, printed articles, and photographs, all from my library.

It gives me pleasure to present the amphibious history of the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II, in the European Theater, as the story of valiant service to our country. The U.S. Coast Guard Historical Office and authors of books and articles that have been prepared, and that preserve records of the events, benefit all of us Coast Guardsmen, past and present. This is my story with the world's greatest amphibious forces. I am proud to have been part of it.

The U.S. Coast Guard operation services are far flung, in peace as well as in war. When at war, the Coast Guard logistical reverts to Navy command. Its officers and seamen are trained to carry out their duties under the most severe conditions, as well as having detailed knowledge of navigation, marine engineering, naval architecture, hydrographs, meteorology, gunnery, and radio, and are willing to give unrelentingly to their services. Our service motto is "Semper Paratus" - "Always Ready."

PREFACE

I will be tracing the history of amphibious assaults in the European Theater World War II 1943 - 1944. There were 24 LCI(L)'s ships manned by the U.S. Coast Guard Group 29, known as Flotilla Four during the landing assaults in the Mediterranean placidity, and known as Flotilla Ten during the Normandy Landings in France.

The monographs have been the chief source of information in preparing the amphibious assault history. The book chapters give significant background and other particular information valuable and interesting to the Flotilla Four/Ten story of the U.S. Coast Guard's important events. The time is clearly ascertainable as recorded. The "Narrative" of the log I keep for ports of call and active assault landings of my tour of duty aboard the LCI(L)89 is particularly valuable and interesting throughout this historical endeavor, and was a primary reference for my story.

The monographs tell the story of our job in these amphibious landings, which truly deserve to be told. They are eminently worth reading. The collection of this material is acknowledgement of the historic landing operations. It is noteworthy that the Coast Guard participated in every amphibious operation by U.S. military forces during World War II. In the text are the landing forces taken as a brief history of the landings in the European Theater and the many activities engaged to deploy these operations.

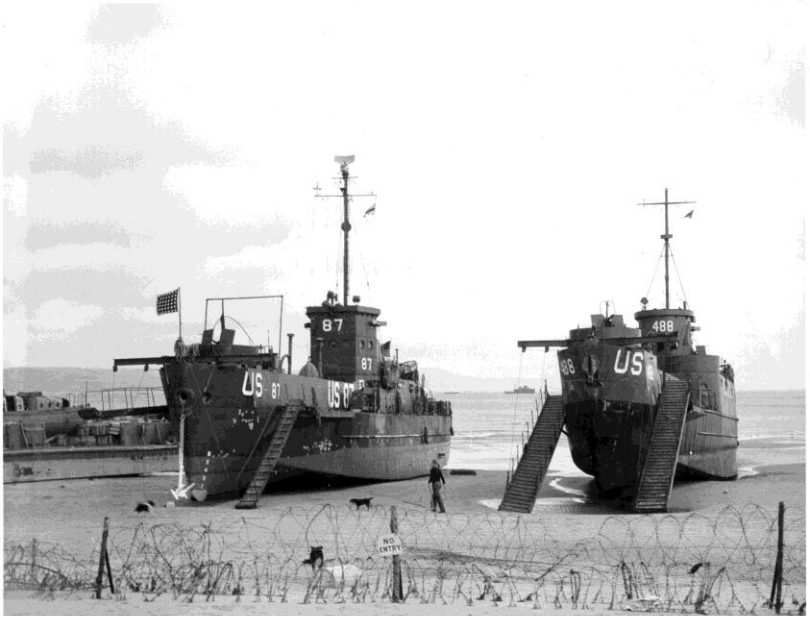
The photographs are mostly official Coast Guard photographs, including images of the ship LCI(L)89, the crew, Flotilla Commander, Captain Miles H. Imlay U.S.C.G. and his aid, and myself at the age of 23 years old. I carried a United States Flag with 48 stars in my sea bag during my service tour. My military discharge/service separation papers are preserved, noting awards "America Campaign," "European - African - Middle Eastern Campaign" with four Bronze Stars, "WWII Victory," and "Citation." The "Citation" is signed by Admiral James M. Loy, Coast Guard Commandant.

The Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal, paid tribute to the distinguished war record of the Coast Guard in the following words: "During the arduous war year, the Coast Guard has earned the highest respect and deepest appreciation of the Navy and Marine Corps. Its performance of duty has been without exception in keeping with the highest traditions of the naval service."

PROLOGUE

The U.S. Coast Guard was used in the European Theater of WWII to meet the necessity of transporting personnel and equipment, especially tanks, from oceangoing vessels to landing craft off exposed beaches.

The British Admiralty had concocted the idea of sending ships that could run themselves aground and discharge their cargos directly onto the beaches. Several types were developed, of which the LST - Landing Ship, Tank - and LCI(L) - Landing Craft, Infantry (large) - were the most important and numerous. Both were designed and built in the United States. The LCI(L) basic displacement was 230 tons, and 380 tons fully loaded. They were equipped with a propulsion plant of eight powerful GMC diesel engines. A typical crew complement was approximately 25 to 33. The fuel capacity was 110 tons of diesel oil, sufficient for an 8,000 mile journey at twelve knots. Top speed was sixteen knots. They were 160 feet in length with a 24 foot beam. They had ramps or catwalks on the port and starboard forward at the bows that were lowered after the vessel slid onto the beach to permit the troops to disembark. They could deliver 200 soldiers plus their officers. Prior to landing on the beach, a large anchor on a steel cable was attached to a motor driven winch that could pull the LCI off the beach. The ramps were returned as the ships backed off the beach.



Two LCI(L)'s, the 87 and the 488, beached during training in England, possibly at Slapton Sands, in the spring of 1944. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph.)

They were equipped with four single barrel 20 MM guns seated in two and one half-inch thick armored tubs, one on the bow, two on the stern deck, and one at mid-ship on the poop deck. They were used for anti-aircraft protection and against shore targets. October 1942 the first LCI(L)'s were completed and had passed the Bureau of Ships (USN) beaching tests. So many of these vessels were built so quickly that the process of assigning formal names was dropped and their hull number had to suffice. USS LCI(L)89, Landing Craft Infantry (Large) was one of

912 of her class that were built.

As the LCI's production continued, later models had improved design and performance. Initially, the LCI's were considered a one-way vessel, but as WWII progressed, they grew in numbers and missions. They were interesting, little-known vessels. Most were used repeatedly again to claw the way back into Europe, and to take one island after another from the Japanese in the Pacific Theater.

As the war progressed, it was obvious that vessels were also needed for in-shore work, where heavier ships could not go. The LCI's provided close inshore fire support, anti-aircraft protection for the beach supply operation, and shuttled personnel groups, equipment, and prisoners after the D-Day landings on the beaches of Normandy.

The Amphibious Forces consisted of landing the infantry requirements with battalion of artillery, company of engineers, a supply company, a medical detachment, and other units required for a particular landing area. The forces were commanded by infantry requirements, referred to as RCT (Regimental Combat Teams). These units were deployed to assigned landing task force area by name: North, East, West Task Force or Joss, Dime, Cent, Omaha, and Utah. The units were landed in waves assigned to beach areas also having names: Red, Blue, Yellow, Dog Red, Easy Red, etc., timed for their arrival. The forces came by transport with their equipment and landed by landing crafts.

The continuous tonnage supply came by transport ships, and they were assigned to anchorage areas to be unloaded after "D" day, "H" hour. These areas were protected by Navy ships. The heavy Navy ships also provided gunfire support for the landing troops.

The Task Force Operation took months of planning to deploy the troops required and the huge tonnage of supplies needed to supply the troops. Later, seaports were captured and cleared for the troop and supply ships.

The book reflects my tour aboard the LCI(L)89 with Amphibious Group 29, Flotillas Four and Ten. The major operation beach landings were the Tunisia Operation "Torch," Sicily Operation "Husky," Italy/Salerno Operation "Avalanche," and France/ Normandy Operation "Overlord," landing soldiers, equipment, and supplies. The information came from my log notes, my memories of these events, and monographs researched.

Twenty-eight of the LCI's were manned by Coast Guard crews. The first twenty-four LCI's were part of a Bob Tail Flotilla under the command of Captain Miles H. Imlay, U.S.C.G., known as Group 29 Flotilla Four during the Mediterranean Sea Operations. Four more LCI's joined the Flotilla when we

arrived in England in preparation for the invasion of France. We were then known as Flotilla Ten.

The LCI(L)89 was built at the Brown Shipbuilding Company Yard, Orange, Texas and placed in commission on 3 February 1943. She was outfitted at Houston, Texas through February 1943. In March, she proceeded to Norfolk, Virginia, via Key West, Florida, for further outfitting and training. Before departing Norfolk in April 1943 she was assigned as Flagship of LCI(L) group 29, Flotilla Four, sailing for French Morocco, North Africa, via Bermuda, arriving in time to take part in the final stages of Operation "Torch." On 10 July 1943 she took part in the invasion of Sicily, Operation "Husky;" 9 September 1943 participated in the invasion at Salerno, Italy, Operation "Avalanche;" 16 October departed Bizerte, Tunisia proceeding to England. On 23 October 1943, via Gibraltar, she arrived at Plymouth, England. In November 1943 through May 1944, she underwent maneuvers with army troops off Southern England Falmouth and Brixham. Prior to this LCI(L) group 29 became known as Flotilla Ten. 5 June 1944 she departed England participating in the Normandy France invasion Operation "Overlord," From 7 June to 20 July she became the Traffic Control Vessel off the Coast of Normandy. From 21 July to 16 September 1944 she ferried troops and did escort duty from England to France. On 5 October 1944 she departed Falmouth, England for Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A.

On 27 October 1944 group 29 underwent overhaul and new crew training. She was reassigned as Flagship for group 104, Flotilla 35, and on 2 January 1945, departed for San Diego, California, via Key West and Panama Canal Zone. Arriving 1 February 1945 she underwent amphibious training and repairs. On 20 April 1945 departed for Pearl Harbor. On 29 April departed for Eniwetok and thence to Guam and Saipan carrying out submarine escort duties in the vicinity until 2 July 1945 when she proceeded to Eniwetok assigned inter-island ferry duty. On 24 November she departed for San Pedro, California, U.S.A., arriving 19 December 1945. Here she was decommissioned on 7 March 1946 after 3 years of service.

CHAPTER 1

COMMISSION

January 1943 - 1000 –

The O.D.'s watch messenger came up to me. The O.D. was the Officer of the Day.

"The O.D. wants to see you now!"

Turning to my assistant, I said, "Tom! Take Over! The O.D. wants to see me."

We were on the drill field with a company of new boot recruits. I left with the watch messenger.

The watch messenger said, "Here's Elder, Sir!" I stepped in the office. "Report as requested, Sir!"

"At ease!"

"Sir, what's up?"

"I just got word that they want you at headquarters. You're to report right away with full gear for shipping out. As soon as you're ready we'll give you transportation to headquarters."

"Yes Sir!"

This surprised me. But, good news--the assignment would get me out of here. I had no love for this place, a newly opened boot camp on Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, just outside of New Orleans.

Dropped off at the coast guard headquarters in downtown New Orleans, I went in and reported to the O.D.

"Elder reporting as requested, Sir!"

"Come in Elder, we were expecting you. Report to Mr. Carpenter, Lieutenant. He is two doors down the hall."

"Aye, Aye, Sir!"

Mr. Carpenter was my Executive Officer aboard the Cutter USCGR *Condor*. The *Condor* was a civilian boat turned over to the Coast Guard for military use. The Coast Guard then turned it over to the Navy. We, the crew, were beached and assigned duty at New Orleans. The Exec. went to headquarters and some of us went to the newly opened boot camp on Lake Pontchartrain.

When I would go on liberty--a pass to leave camp or ship--I would stop here at headquarters to see Mr. Carpenter. He was watching for ship assignment for me. I wanted back on sea duty, a Cutter or Attack Transport.

I knocked on the door.

"Come in!"

I stepped in and said, "I report Sir!"

"Yes! Sit down."

"Yes Sir! What do you have for me, Sir?"

"We have a report here requesting experienced petty officers for some kind of transport ship duty that are being built over in Texas. I thought you may be interested in this request. So, you wanted a ship. Now you got one. It doesn't have a name; but its number is 89. We are sending several of you petty officers over to Orange, Texas, the Consolidated Steel Corporation ship building yards where these transports are being built. Wish you good luck, Bill, on your new assignment."

The next day we arrived at the shipyard and reported to our respective ships. I went aboard the 89. What a weird looking ship. This contraption looked like a box. What would they use these for? Weird! Workmen were still working on the ship. I asked one of the men if he knew if the Captain was aboard. He pointed to the bridge, the pilot house. I set my sea bag down, climbed up the ladder to the poop deck, the mid ship deck, and over to the bridge. Stuck my head in the hatchway.

"Captain Sir!"

"Yes!"

I stepped into the bridge, saluted, said,"I report in aboard, Sir," and handed him my orders.

"Welcome aboard son! I am Captain Love." He looked over my orders. "Elder, we are not berthing aboard as of now. We do not have the ship up and running, but expect to in a week or so when the ship will be commissioned. You will stay over at the Navy barracks. Tomorrow at 0800 report on-board. See me and we will get you acquainted with the ship and assign your duties."

"Yes Sir!"

"For now report to the O.D. at the Navy barracks. They will take care of you over there."

"Aye, Aye Sir!" I saluted and left the bridge.

As I retrieved my sea bag a workman said, "Boy! She's a one way ticket. Ha, ha!" A couple of men there chuckled, too, remarking, "We'll see about that!"

As I went over to the barracks, I was thinking about the old man, the Captain, Mr. Love. I liked him. He looked like a regular Coast Guard Officer, not a reserve officer. I hoped my assignment would go well aboard 89. I found out she was a troop landing ship.

The Navy O.D. at the barracks was a Chief Boatsman Mate, Klein, an easy

spoken guy whom I liked immediately. He assigned me a bunk on the second floor, showed me the recreation room and dining room on the first floor, and gave me the chow schedule and house rules.

That night I found that there was no heat in the building. It was cold and very uncomfortable for sleeping. The other coasties were there too, with some navy personnel. We soon got acquainted and visited, telling stories and going on liberty together. The barracks was a holding area for personnel waiting to get aboard their ships and the navy duty men assigned at the ship yard. Our stay went well here except for the cold nights sleeping there in the barracks.

Next morning, at 0800, I boarded the 89. Gee! This was an ugly looking ship- very boxy. Oh well--I'd see how I felt about her when I learned more.

I reported to the Captain. who introduced me to Mr. Hilton, Lieutenant JG, and Mr. Piper, LTJG, the engineering officer. Later on I met some of my shipmates:

Chief Motor Machinist Mate, Lauve
Chief Quarter Master Lewis
Electrician Mate - First Class, Holliday
Motor Machinist Mate - First Class, Copeland
Signalmen Mate - First Class, Wrase
Gunman Mate - Second Class, Vaughn
Seaman - First Class, Karner
Seaman - First Class, King
Fireman - First Class, Schlockman
Fireman Motor Machinist Mate - Third Class, Cox

I had a nice visit with the Captain and officers, Hilton and Piper. Mr. Piper invited me to come to see him to acquaint me with the mechanical equipment. Mr. Hilton gave me an orientation of the ship. We started at the bow (forward part of the ship), reviewing the side mounted catwalks, the ramps for the troops to disembark. Then came the forecastle deck compartment that housed the anchor windlass for dropping and bringing in the anchor.

The forecastle top deck supported the bow tub with a 20 mm gun. The two bulkheads from the forecastle, one each side of the ship, formed the bulwarks area. The two troop compartments hatchway came up into the bulwarks. The square pilot house was about mid-ship and housed the other troop compartment hatchway. It also housed the radio and navigation room, the pilot house with the navigation and steering equipment, and above was the fly bridge.

The ship looked so weird. It was not a pleasant shape for a ship. The mid deck housed the officers' quarters, wardroom, galley, and crew head facilities. The head is the bathroom. Below the main deck of the mid deck house was the third

troop compartment, crew's and dining quarters, engine room, and ammunition magazine. Below this deck are the fuel and ballast tanks. On the fantail deck, the stern of the ship, were two gun tubs with 20 mm guns mounted inside and a deck winch for the stern anchor with a deck hatch to the aft steering room.

I thought the 89 had little glamour. It was just rather small and compact. Soon I began to get feelings for the ship, thinking about the most responsible assignment of my life--Can I handle it?

So, I've see the framework where I'll be performing my duties, running the deck ground tackle--the equipment used to moor the ship, anchoring and docking; it consists of chain and rope lines, hardware, etc.--and assisting where necessary, reporting to the Executive Officer for directive orders. Most of these duties are generally routine aboard ship.

At that time, we were actively occupied engaged in testing the engines, equipment, accepting materials aboard, and getting acquainted with the ship's equipment. The big joke was the steering handle used to steer the ship, instead of a traditional wheel in the pilot house. It amazed me. There I was steering the ship, just like a street car man, with the handle turning the rudder, not adding power like the troll man. Hydraulics were starting to play a big role in the equipment we were using. The workmen would tease us about the trolley car handle. "The One-way Trolley Car." All would have a big laugh and make comments.

The Big Day has arrived! The ship has been accepted by the Navy. She is commissioned, USS LCI(L)89. February 3, 1943. Damn! No pretty lady to break a champagne bottle or flower to christen the ship, nor words or prayer spoken for her sake. We said LCI stood for "Lousy Civilian Idea." God bless her.

Two days later we backed away from the shipyard dock under the ship's own power, sailing for Port Arthur with our skeleton crew. We sailed down the Sabine River into Lake Sabine to Port Arthur to take on fuel. The Baker flag was raised, a red flag indicating that we were taking on fuel. It meant dangerous area, no smoking. Smoking lamp out. Oh no! Diesel fuel is running over the deck. Shut off the fuel! Fuel is running down the hatchway into the crew's quarters. What a great start. Come to find out, Art Cox who was watching the fuel hose and had gone around to the galley to get a cup of coffee. Just that quickly it happened. I was coming down from the bulwarks on the port side when I noticed the fuel spill. What a mess! A great way to start off with the ship. Mr. Piper was beside himself. We got things under control with the help of a dock cleanup group. I can still smell the diesel fuel. It was weeks before the smell left the crew quarters. Poor Cox. He felt bad about the spill.

The Captain got the crew together to talk about this mishap. He was good

about it, indicating that accidents will happen and that we must learn to discipline ourselves and stay alert when performing our duties aboard ship. He said it will prevent loss of life on the ship. We all knew what was expected of us.

"Do not let these accidents happen," he said.

We spent the night at Port.

The next morning we sailed out of Lake Sabine to the Gulf of Mexico bound for Galveston, Texas. The Gulf waters were calm with a light breeze and it was enjoyable and exciting to see Galveston. It was exciting to come into a harbor you have never seen before. The interesting ships in the port, the docks and warehouses busy with people working on the docks. Later I found out that we would be here for awhile until the other LCI's arrive. We tied up with several other LCI's to wait for others to arrive.

The next evening Seaman Chatalain flagged a shrimp boat over to our ship. Chatting with them he came up with a basket full of shrimp. He gave them $2.00. The guy's were all excited about the idea of a shrimp feast. One shouted, "We need some beer to go with the shrimp." A few fellows went to get some beer. The cook got a big soup kettle. Lots of commotion! The shrimp were cooking and the beer arrived.

The first batch of shrimp came out; we peeled them, ate them, and drank the beer. Finally, Chief Lauve said we should add some beer to the cooking shrimp. So, into the pot went the beer. Everybody was chuckling, enjoying the festivities.

Around 2100, the Captain and the officers returned. Chief Lauve and I hollered to the guys to hide the beer. Well, the officers saw us all on the fantail eating and came back to see what was going on. Chatalain grabbed a handful of shrimp, put them on a plate, "Captain have some shrimp." The officers joined us. The Captain spoke up, "Boys go ahead and finish your beer. After this evening there will be no more alcohol aboard. Enjoy yourselves, but hold down the loud talk. Good evening."

The officers took some shrimp with them. We toasted the officers. "Here's to our jolly officers."

Chatalain came aboard just before we left the shipyards. He was a little on the heavy side, with a round smiling face. He was a Cajun humorist and you just had to like the guy. He spoke French and the Louisiana Cajun lingo. Aboard a small ship things were not as strict as aboard larger ships because of the personnel size and the type of ship.

Our days in Galveston were busy as we were getting more supplies, running speed curves and compensating the compass. During these days personnel was

reporting aboard. The executive office was one of them, LTJG. Mr. Howard.

On February 20th, the 21 assembled LCI's departed from Galveston, Texas for Norfolk, Virginia. Heading out to sea, I was excited again as I loved getting out on the water.

As the morning voyage progressed, I could see and feel the weather changing. The sky became darker and the wind started to pick up. Shortly after lunch the sea conditions changed rapidly. We were about 35 nautical miles into our voyage when the ship started rolling, pitching, and tossing waves, taking over these flat bottom ships. I would think riding a Bronco would be easier, with all the up and down, tossing and rolling.

We had no idea which way the ship was going. One thing for sure: The unseasoned sailors knew which way it was going as they lost their guts over the side or in the bucket on the deck near their bunks. They were sea sick, suffering where they would have to feel better before they could die. This went on into the next afternoon, over 24 hours. The ship was a mess!

Mr. Piper, Chief Lauve, Holliday, Copland, and Cox handled the engine room. Captain Love, Chief Lewis, Wrase, Karner, and I handled the navigation, not only our ship, but for the whole flotilla. We handled the ship for over 24 hours, ran through the galley, picked up some bread, Spam, cheese or whatever we could get our hands on and got out. We ate on watch, taking turns.

Our new officers were sick too. It got so bad that we made port at Key West, Florida. It took three days to get these men back on their feet and to clean up the ship. I started to get second thoughts about this cigar box. Will it make the Atlantic crossing?

On our fifth day into the voyage from Galveston, we sailed out of Port Key West bound for Norfolk. All were praying for calm weather. The weather was a warm 88 degrees with calm waters. We sailed around the Keys into the Atlantic up the coast. All was well.

The next morning coming up the coast to Cape Lookout, near North Carolina, we started to hit some heavy seas. It got worse by the time we got to Cape Hatteras. Up we went and slammed down the other side of the waves. The ship shuddered. The crew groaned. Sometimes when she came down she would stick her bow into the next wave throwing water over the bow and down the decks. Whoo! She acted different in these Atlantic waves. These 6' high waves rolled with a deep trough, up and down she went. Some of our men had grown up and

were becoming sailors, accustomed to ship action. Thank God we were not far from Norfolk.

About 1500, we sailed into the Norfolk Naval Operating Base. It was starting to get dark and the temperature was in the low 40s. A big change. I didn't get a good look at the harbor as we came in, huddled in foul weather gear, waiting to tie up at a dock. No doubt this shake down cruise was a relief to the LCI's crew. They were now salty sailors.

CHAPTER 2

FLOTILLA FOUR

Here it is! The discussion everyone has been talking about; what will we be doing and where will we go. Three more LCI's arrived. They were built on the east coast. The twenty-four LCI's were formed into Flotilla Four under the Command of Captain Myles Imlay U. S. Coast Guard. The purpose of our facilities, amphibious nature, meant that troops would have to land on enemy beaches regardless of surf or the opposition encountered. Again, the Coast Guard has been highly valuable in landing operations with their traditional knowledge of handling boats in all kinds of surf and under all sorts of conditions. The Coast Guardsmen with these equally essential factors will be an asset forming the LCI's into Flotilla Four to function in the European Operations.

The Watchstander woke me. Rolling out of my bunk, hitting the deck, putting on my clothes, I went top side. Opening the hatch the cold air hit my face. Boy! Stuck my head out and saw frost on the deck, then realized we are in North Country.

I went to the head, did my thing, and down to the crew quarters to rally the men. "Hit the deck you swabys! There is a big surprise for you on top side." You should have heard them complain. Up the gangway they went, checking the top side before going into the head. The guys in the head would holler, "Close that G - D hatch!" The head is just opposite the hatch.

The crew started coming to life.

After chow, I reported to the Exec., Mr. Howard.

"Good Morning Mr. Howard!"

"Good Morning Boatswain."

That's strange--he called me Boatswain.

"Good news and bad news. Good news your promotion has been approved Boatswain 2C. It was official March 1st."

"Thank You Sir."

"Bad news--our captain is being relieved and reassigned."

"So sorry to hear that. I will miss Captain Love."

"Our new skipper will arrive this afternoon. We will carry on as usual."

"Yes Sir! May I speak with the captain, Sir?"

"Yes."

I stepped in to see the captain.

"Captain, Sir?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Howard tells me you are leaving us."

"They transferred me. Said I was too old for foreign duty. I tried to have the order canceled. They would not accept my request. I was looking forward to this command."

"I'll miss you Sir. We had a great experience together on our shakedown cruise from Galveston."

"Yes, that was an experience."

"Thank You for my promotion."

"Elder you earned it! I wish you and the crew my best regards. Hope you all return safely."

"Thank You Sir." I gave him a snappy salute and left with a smile, happy over my promotion, but not happy knowing we will have a new skipper. I'm sure he will be a reserve officer. Things could get a little hectic with these reserve officers. They are not experienced ship masters, like Love. I went through that aboard the Cutter *Condor*.

1400: The Exec. assembled the crew on top side at the bulwarks to introduce our new Captain, Mr. Fabian, Lt. J.G. He looked small in height about 5'8". His face had a leathery look, weather exposure, and light hair. He may be a mariner, a sailor. Let's hope so.

The Captain did not say much. He mentioned that we should carry on as we were and would be looking forward to meeting us personally. We were dismissed, returning to our duties.

Later I learned that Mr. Fabian has a two-masted sailboat, Schooner type, about 80 ft. long on the west coast of California. He used it for chartering people who wanted to sail to Hawaii. He's a "rag sailor," the nickname for sail boat people. "Stink pot" is for motor boat people.

Our training began on the Virginia beaches. This is where we got our first experience approaching a beach with the LCI's. We learned to drop the stern anchor to be used to retract the ship off the beach. Virginia Beach was the place of our initiation with the LCI's. We worked hard learning at putting out the ramps and retracting the ramps, then backing off the beach using the stern anchor to pull the ship, a procedure called "kedging."

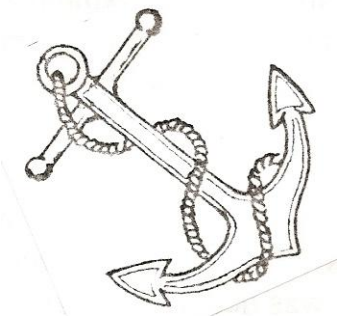
Needless to say, first few landings left a lot to be desired. We joked and laughed about them. No injury occurred and the beaches haven't been the same since. The ship had to be steered safely through the surf, drop the stern anchor a short distance from the beach, and beach the ship in a position to get the ramps down from which the soldiers would disembark to get ashore and dig in. These intensive rehearsals of invasion tactics taught us to be calm and determined in handling the ramps and stern anchor in the performance of the LCI landings. Every individual aboard became adept at personally handling their exploits in so far as being ready to perform beach landings and kedging off the beach.

We worked hard. It was good to get back into Port. It would be dark by the time we would be secured at the dock. We were cold and hungry. After chow the guys would hit the sack. The watchers who had to go on duty would groan. A sailor works day and night. We did get a day off from the beaching exercise when we were scheduled to go to the Degaussing Station. The Degaussing Station is where the ship's magnetic field is neutralized, a protection from magnetic mines.

The crew was assembled on top side. Captain Fabian briefed us about the Flotilla. "We will have the group Commander, Lt. Commander Unger, U.S.C.G. aboard our ship. He will have under his command 12 of the LCI's. This makes our ship the Command ship for this group. I expect you people to keep this ship in ship-shape at all times, as the command ship. Tomorrow, we sail for Bermuda, 1 April 1943. I expect the crew to make the ship ready for tomorrow's departure. As of now, all liberty is canceled. No one is to leave the ship unless permission is granted. Watchstander to be posted. That is all. Dismissed."

The Exec. asked me if I had any questions.

"No Sir! We will check all ground tackle and life rafts to make sure all is ready. Also, I will have fresh water put in the life raft's canisters."



CHAPTER 3

CONQUERING THE ATLANTIC

I was full of excitement with the idea of leaving the United States, and I did not sleep well. Up earlier than usual, I went top side, my mind still on our departure despite having many flashbacks of home.

Up the ladder to the poop deck. My hands were cold from the heavy frost on the ladder rungs. I wanted to double-check the life rafts. My thoughts were still on my folks back home, I started down the ladder. Oops! I slipped and fell to the deck, into the stanchion cable. That knocked the wind out of me but kept me from falling overboard. As I lay dazed on the deck, Chief Lauve was just coming out of the engine room hatch saw me lying on the deck and came running up to me.

"Are you alright?"

My head was still spinning. He got me in a sitting position.

"I think I'm Ok."

He helped me up. As the shock wore off, I realized my right ankle hurt.

"Chief, I think I broke my ankle!"

"I'll get Doc - Stay still."

Doc was our pharmacist mate, Clayson. The ankle began to swell. I was in great pain. Doc examined my ankle. "You may have fractured it. I'm going over to the hospital to pick up some supplies I ordered. I'll take you with me. We'll get the ankle x-rayed."

Doc and I left for the hospital. As I could not put my weight on my right foot, he helped me into the jeep that was assigned to our ship. At the Navy hospital, he pulled up to the front door, hopped out of the jeep and ran inside to get a wheelchair for me. On the way to the check-in station he explained our situation to the nurse. They got a doctor right away and rushed me to the x-ray room. Holding up the X-rays, the doctor studied them saying, "No fractured bones. You tore up your ankle very badly. You'll have to stay off that foot for awhile. We'll get you some treatment for the ankle. I'll have them get you a room."

As I was wheeled down to the lobby, my mind was reeling: I can't stay in the hospital - I've got to get back to the ship. I wonder where Doc is. I don't want to be left behind. What can I do? I was deeply concerned about what would happen to me.

From behind I heard a voice. I turned. It was Doc. "How did you make out?" Happy to see him, I said "I'm Okay!" Before I could think, I said "Let's get out of here!" Doc had a box in his hands.

"I'll take this out to the jeep and come back for you."

"Give me the box and let's get going." I got the box and out we went.

As we left in the jeep, Doc asked, "What did the doctor say?"

"He said no fractures. I'm to stay off my foot for several days."

"Ok, I have crutches on board. We'll put some hot packs on the ankle."

"Yea! The doctor said that's what I should have."

When I arrived at the ship some of the guys saw us and came out to meet us. "How you doing, Boats? Is it broken?" They helped me aboard the ship.

The exec came over to me. "Heard about your accident. Glad to see your return."

"Me too."

"You take it easy. I'll be talking to you later."

Our Chief Cook/Steward for the Officers, James Zachery—Zak—brought me some bean soup he had made for the noon chow.

"Here Boats, this will make you feel better."

"Yea! I'll be farting my way to Bermuda." He chuckled. His round face, big white smile, big eyes, just lit up his brown face. You just had to love the guy. Our young cook, David Johnson, was way over his head trying to cook for the ship's crew. So, the captain made Zak our head cook, and Johnson his assistant. That made Dave happy. It made a good arrangement. He could learn from Zak, and better chow was making the crew happy.

About 1400 I could hear the engines start. The crew was moving up to top side. The LCI's started to sail out of Port Norfolk. Outside the harbor the flotilla formed into a convoy of six ships in four lines. I could feel that we had about four-foot seas running. It was sloppy going into the night off Cape Hatteras, the winds picked up and the seas got up to six- and eight-foot waves. I could feel the 89 rolling, tossing, banging down. When she would bang down the ship just shuddered. I had a very uncomfortable night.

After the evening, chow, Doc put some hot packs on my ankle. I confessed to him that the doctor was making arrangements to put me in a hospital room.

"That explains why you were in such a hurry to get away from the hospital. You had it made! Just think you could have gotten out of this deal."

"I know. But I wanted to stay with the ship and get into the action."

The crew started to get "salty," an expression for a seasoned sailor. Everybody was getting to know each other. We were bonding. On the third day I was starting to feel better. Sun was out. That afternoon we sailed into Port St. George, Bermuda. It was warm and a great site for us, with deep blue water and white sand beaches. It was exciting. The guys were already talking about getting liberty. The port and the buildings and everything looked so clean -- a great sight. The water was so clear you could see 30 to 40 feet down to the bottom.

Here is where we got our training on the 20 MM guns. The shooting range was on the other side of the island up on a high bluff. Our targets were pulled by airplanes. I was able to get around for this training. I did very well with the 20 MM gun. I picked up on this type of shooting. The targets were pulled behind the airplane at about 90 to 100 miles per hour. It was like shotgun shooting at flying targets. I was brought up on game bird shooting, hunting grouse, woodcock, ring-neck pheasant, and quail with a shotgun. You had to lead these fast flying birds at different angles. This came to me naturally with the 20 MM gun shooting at these moving targets. The web sight ring mounted on the gun helped you for your distance and leading the target. Also, the tracer bullet indicated your lead on the target. Every fourth round in the magazine was a tracer. This helped me get my timing to get on the target quickly. I enjoyed this training. It was very challenging. I was cited for my 20 MM gun shooting. They assigned me the gunner on the ship's bow gun. This became my battle station during General Quarters during enemy alerts.

The crew got liberty here at St. George. They toured the island by bicycle, had a few beer beach parties. It didn't take long for this to get old. This is about all a sailor could do here. My tour of the island was to and from the shooting range due to my bum ankle. I caught the navy bus up to the shooting range. I watched the shooting and visited with the marine gunners doing the 20 MM gun training.

On the 10th of April, we departed Port St. George. Here we rendezvoused with a very large convoy sailing east. It was a great site to see all these ships. There were over a 100 ships, troop transports, freighters, and oil tanker ships. Eight destroyers and twelve destroyer escorts flanked the convoy. At times they would sail up through the convoy.

Our first few days into our voyage were smooth sailing with warm sunshine. We all were nicely getting settled in with our routine, with a four hour watch every twelve hours. Zak was serving us very good chow. He did wonders with his menus cooked on oil stoves. At times there was no great hot chow, for the LCI would pitch

and roll so severely that even a genius could not cook a meal. We would resort to K-rations and cold spam.

Sometimes the weather got sloppy with strong winds and heavy seas. Standing watch with these heavy seas on the bridge and fly bridge became an unforgettable workout. It was like climbing up a snowy mountain-side and then sliding, losing your balance, and falling down, then climbing up again and falling down again. I'd go below from watch on the bridge feeling like a tennis ball bruised from the bounces. The wind would whistle throwing the spoon drift up from the waves against the LCI's bridge port lights it would feel like being sprayed with a water hose.

She'd ride up a mountainous sea, all 160 feet of her; then slap down hard into the trough shuddering all along her hull. The wave would crunch against the deck tower. The water rolled off her decks. You couldn't imagine what it was like in an Atlantic storm on the LCI. Roll! Pitch! Listen to the water as she would shudder and creek. The guys would chant, "Roll and Pitch you S-O-B! Old washboard's starting up again." That's exactly what it was like, a washboard. Our LCI's didn't have the rolling motion of a destroyer. The flat bottoms were not a displacement hull like a normal ship. We rode on top of the water like a wood chip. Rough! You wouldn't believe it. It would climb up and down the washboard.

An LCI(L) on rough seas. (U.S. Coast Guard photo.)

You should have seen our officers trying to get sun sights on the fly bridge in heavy seas. They looked like the old cartoon of a drunk wrapped around the lamp post. The same would happen when we would be using the range finder. We had to keep our distance from the ship ahead of us and on beams, right and left of the ship. The helmsman had bars to hold on to with one hand and the other on the steering handle with the roll and pitches, always trying to keep from going air-born.

Our fly bridge was at times was the only part of the LCI visible to the other ships, and it looked like a "U" boat, German sub conning tower. Thank goodness for the many LCI's and the fact that our position in the convoy was well known to the destroyers.

We encountered heavy weather seas over two-thirds of the Atlantic crossing. Ten days into our voyage the days began to stretch where time took on impending

threat of the seas. Would the LCI's stay a float? Such pounding and hull shuddering. Some of the guys were thrown out of their bunks. This did not happen to me, but I was tossed up in the air different times. When the waves hit the ship it felt as if someone gave you a hard shove.

As conditions were permitted, various drills were held to acquaint the crew with their stations and duties. General Quarters alarm sounded day or night. The 20 MM gun crew, trunnion operator, magazine loader and gunner would man the guns. Damage control drills for patching holes in hull or superstructure, water pumps to be manned and different types of repairs, abandoning ship with life rafts. All hands were assigned a duty. We were busy, busy, busy!

As we approached the Canary Islands one night, we had a "U" boat attack. There were two subs that had got under the convoy. They torpedoed two of the merchant ships. General Quarters! We jumped out of our bunks. The alarm woke my feeling of excitement mixed with possible danger. As I got to my 20 MM gun I could see the destroyer's silhouette from the blazing ships dropping a barrage of depth charges. It was a long night. We stayed at General Quarters until daylight.

Well, the convoy was scattered all over the Ocean. It took all day to get the convoy formed up again. This was our first encounter with the war. It was for real. Our training was put to the test. I could still feel the excitement. We wondered what happened to the crew aboard the ships torpedoed and if the destroyers destroyed the "U" boats. Due to radio silence, we never knew what happened.

We finally arrived on the North Africa coast off Casablanca, Morocco, on 29 April, after a long 19 day voyage. As we sailed northeast along the Morocco coast, the waters were clear enough to see hammerhead sharks on the bottom. It was my first time to see a live hammerhead shark. The guys were making lots of comments about them.

Churning up the Wadi Seba River to Port Lyatey, we put aside our distrust for our ship, LCI 89, "One Way Ticket," "Trolley Car," and "Coffin." We now appreciated her, a "Swell Gal" with confidence as Veterans of the Seas. We conquered the Atlantic!

CHAPTER 4

NORTH AFRICA OPERATION "TORCH"

April 29, 1943 –

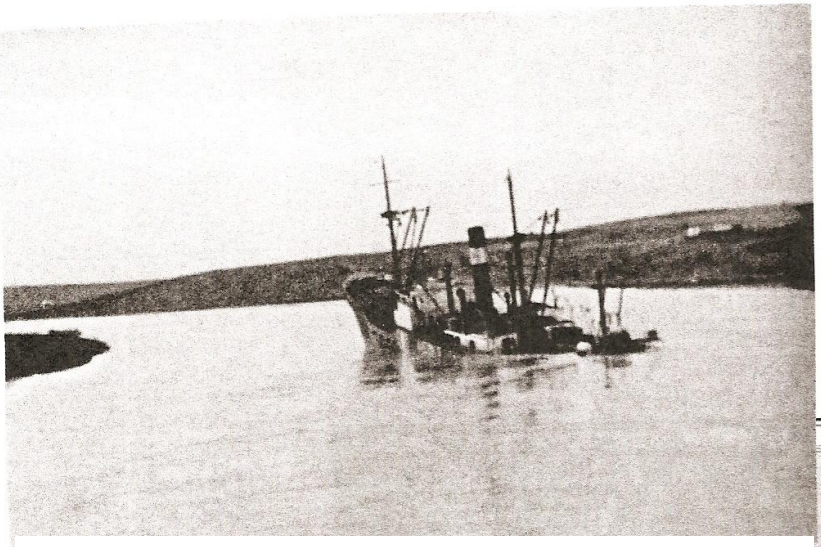
As we sailed up the Wadi Sebu River to Port Lyautey (now known as Kentra) Morocco, along its banks and rolling sandy terrain, we could see there was plenty of vicious fighting from the debris of small boats and army vehicles destroyed and burned out. It took two days for the Western Naval Task Force to capture and secure the airfield near Port Lyautey. That afternoon of 10 November 1942, the airfield was in such condition that P-40 fighter planes from the carrier *Chenango* were landing on the field.

Arriving at Port Lyautey, small ships of various sizes were sunk in the harbor bay. Very weird looking; some were sitting on the bottom of the bay with their superstructure sticking out of the water. Others lay on their side. The Germans sunk them and destroyed the docks trying to close down the harbor.

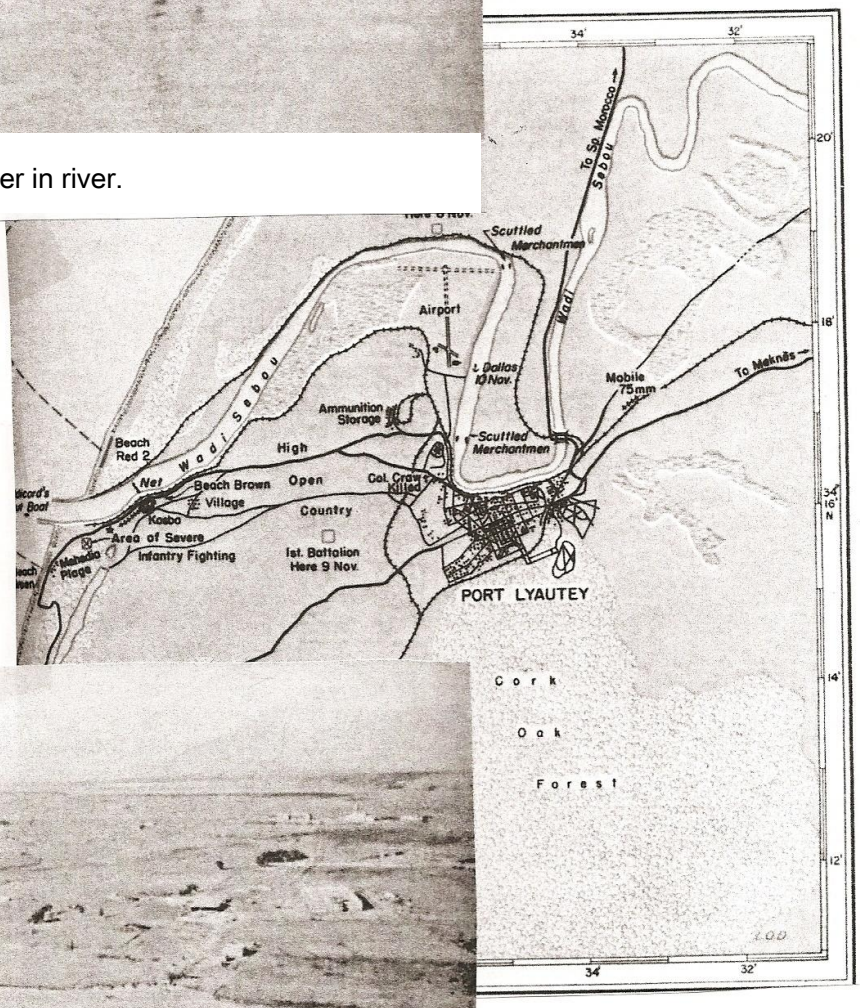
We had to moor along the harbor bank. When the tide would go out our LCI would sit on the soft muddy bottom leaning about 10 degree. The gangplank rigged up to get ashore was narrow and springy with a guy line on one side.

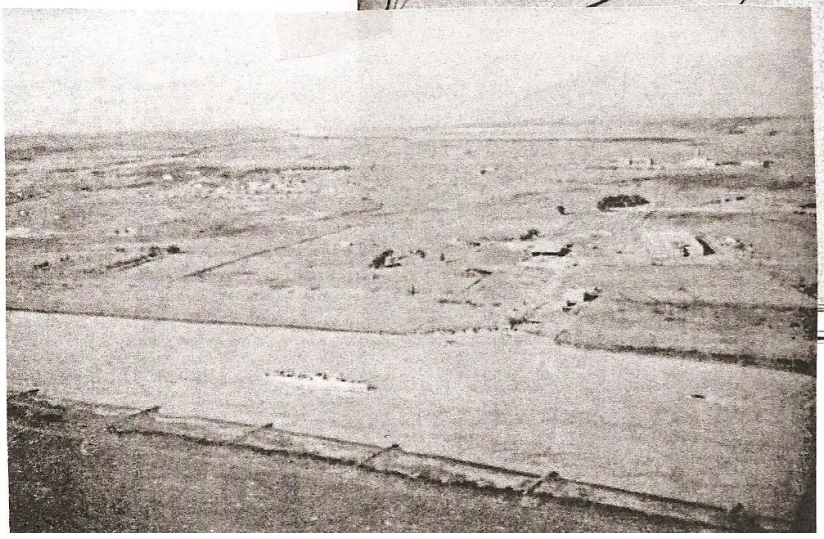
We got shore liberty while the oil and cargo was being unloaded. It was great to get off the ship after the long voyage over the Atlantic Ocean. On 1 May, my 22nd birthday, I got liberty. Needless to say my friend, Gunner's Mate Vaughan, and I left the ship to celebrate my birthday. We had a six hour liberty pass, 1200 to 1800. We found a café with a bar. We bellied up to the bar and ordered some whisky. The barman said we only have cognac, brandy, and wine. I said, "Cognac? Never heard of it. Let's try some." There were a couple of soldiers at the bar and they chuckled at my remark. We chatted with them, getting information about the area. They told us about a couple of Cafés down the street.

We left and started down the dirt street to check out these Cafés. I said to Vaughan, "Boy it's hot out here." He agreed as we walked into the Café and spotted a couple of guys from the ship. They joined us and the celebration continued. I had to relieve myself. I asked where the head was, and I was told it was out in the street. Out I went, and there it was on the street corner! It had two walls parallel with one side and had a trough at the bottom. Here you leaked up against the wall's bottom. What odor! It was worse than the odor in a dairy barn back

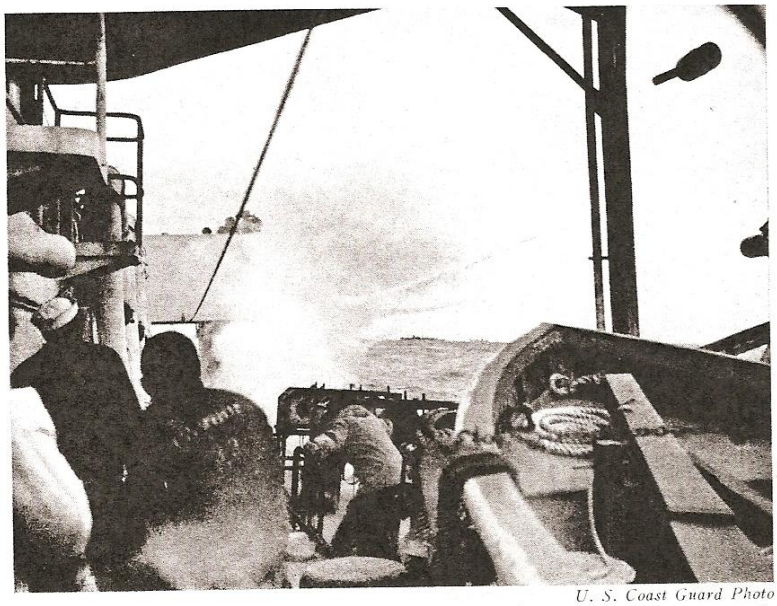


Scuttled French freighter in river.





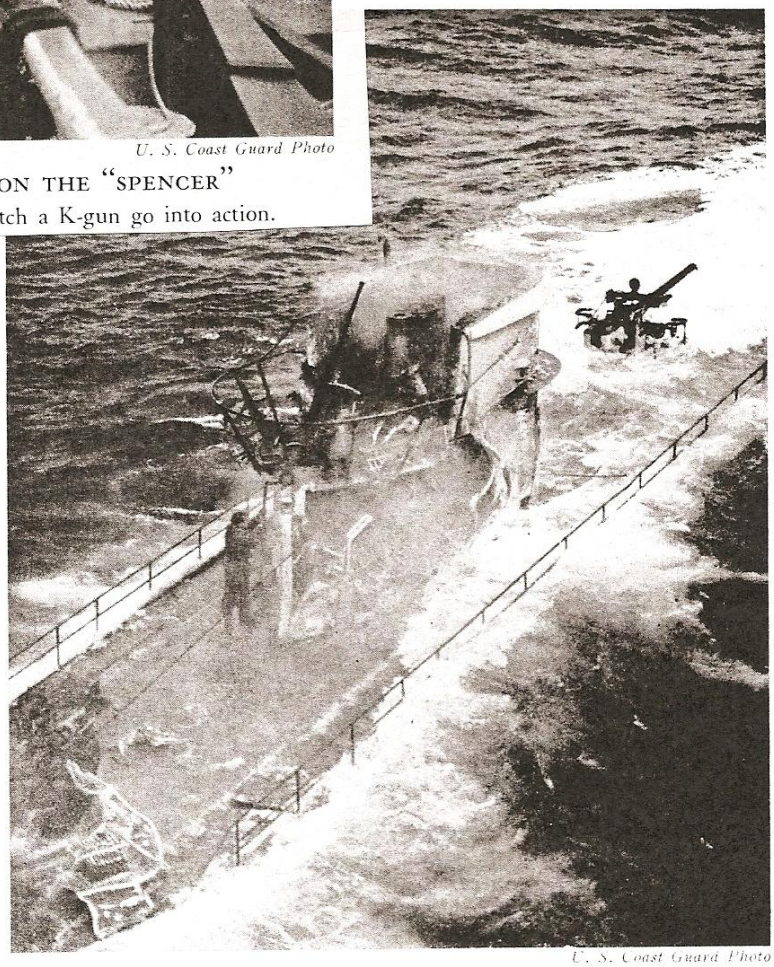
U.S.S. Dallas sails up the Wadi Sebou near the Port Lyautey airdrome.



U. S. Coast Guard Photo

K-GUN GOES INTO ACTION ON THE "SPENCER"

Sailors aboard the cutter *Spencer* watch a K-gun go into action.



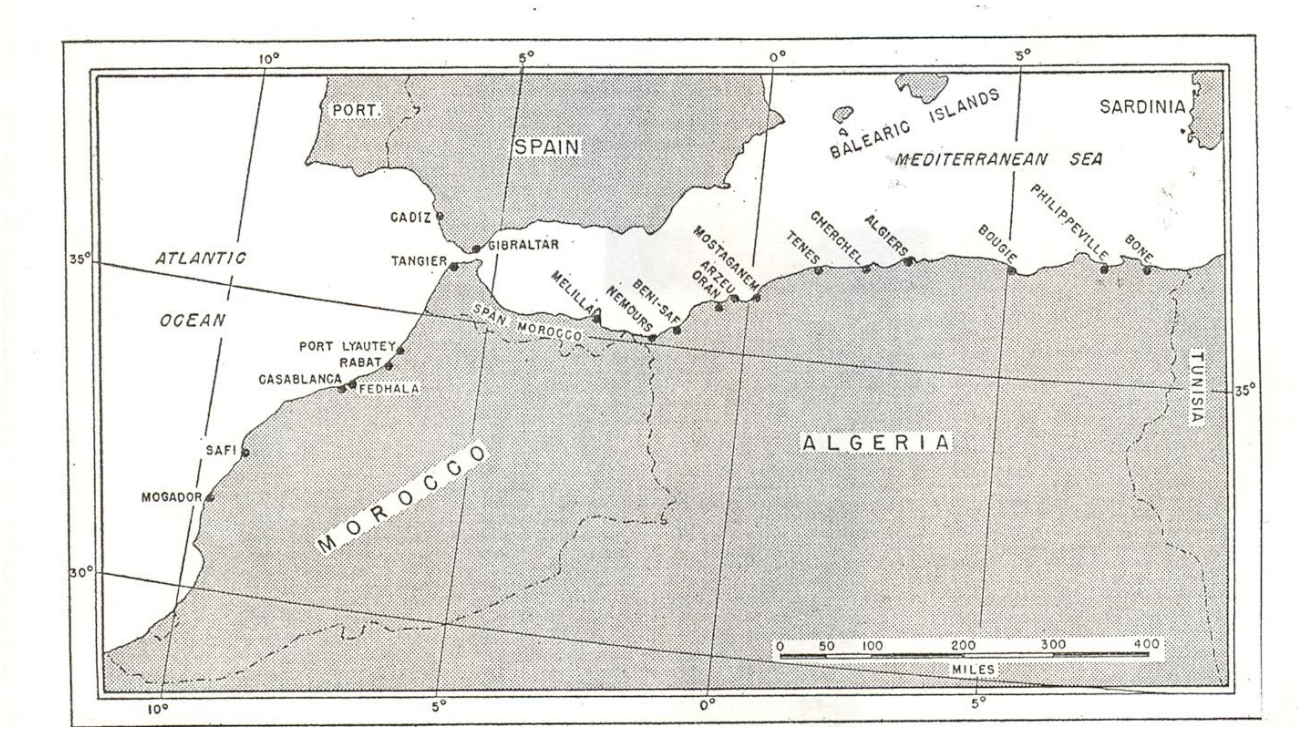
U. S. Coast Guard Photo

COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB

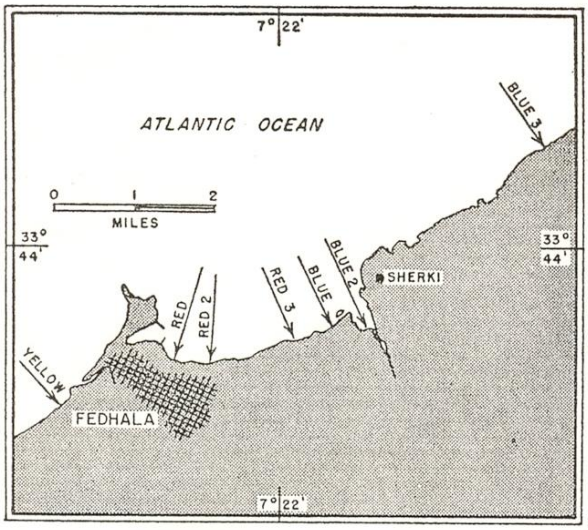
Effect of the U. S. Coast Guard cutter *Spencer's* fire are visible in this close-up shot of the U-boat, taken as the battle raged. The Nazi standing by the stanchion amidships disappeared a moment after this picture was taken by a Coast Guard photographer. The U-boat had been trying to sneak into the center of the convoy.

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Spencer* depth charges German submarine U-175.

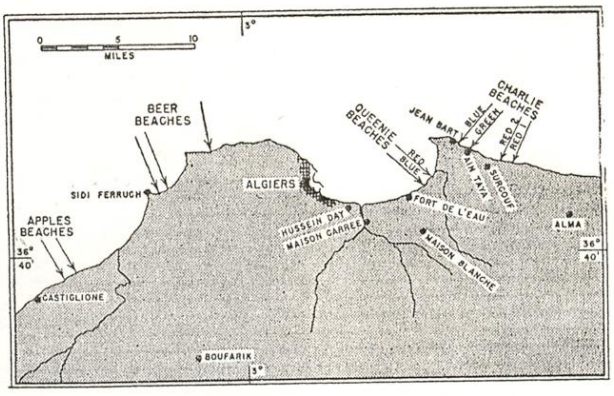
The U-boat was severely damaged and had to surface. Gunfire then battered the enemy, and the Germans abandoned ship.
(U.S. Coast Guard photos.)



Invasion shores of North Africa



Attack area at Fedhala



Assault beaches at Algiers

home. Flies all over the place. What a rude awaking.

Back at the bar the head took over the conversation with lots of remarks and laughter. We then decided to check out the other Café. It was larger, cleaner and neater. The drinking continued. The cognac, as we were shown, would light like a candle burning a blue flame if put a match or a lighter to it in a shot glass. That amused us for awhile. The time sailed by quickly. We had to start back to the ship.

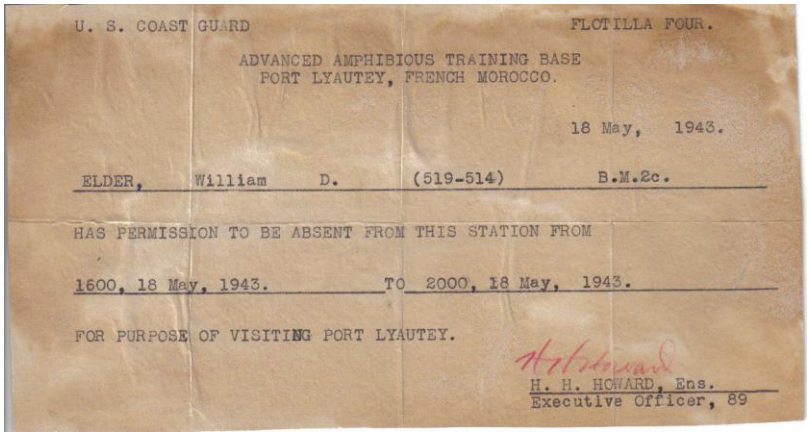
As sailors, when you hit port you had to be salty and try to drink the town dry. That is the story. You would have thought the first time you touched foreign soil you would go sightseeing. To tell you the truth, I do not remember anything about the town of Port Lyautey. During later liberties we would go over to Rabat and walk around the streets, visit the shops and buy leather goods as souvenirs to send back home. Of course, we stopped at a Café, had a drink and a bite to eat.

Walking down the hot dry dirt street on the way back to the ship I was sweating, the sun was hot, my head started to throb. The cognac had hit me. I was losing it. I didn't want the guys to know how I was feeling. They started to help me to stand up walking. My legs were getting rubbery. Wouldn't you know, the tide was out. The ship was leaning about 10 degrees in the mud. The guys helping me back had a hard time getting me down the gang plank. To this day, I do not remember anything after getting to the gang plank except what the guys told me.

I fell off the gang plank. The guys had a hard time trying to fish me out of the mud onto the ship. They stuck me under the shower, uniform on, washed the mud off and dumped me into my bunk. The next day I was still out of it. My head ached. I didn't know which end was up and didn't much care. I felt bad. Thanks to Doc, who nursed me back to health. It took two days. I learned that cognac and sun don't mix. I was lucky I did not die with a brain hemorrhage or have a stroke.

As I started to feel better my shipmate told me what happened. They would tease me about it at times. It was in good nature and we would laugh about it. I was ashamed of myself and embarrassed, but I outlived it. Everybody, officers and crew were very good about my going over the deep six.

This event brought back memories of what dad had told me one day just before I graduated from high school. "Son, I do not mind if you smoke and drink, I want you to know when it starts to handle you, you are no longer a man." After this bout I made sure I would always be in control of my life. As I tell this story, I am in good health and enjoying life at age 87. I often think about dad's remark to me.



U. S. COAST GUARD FLOTILLA FOUR.

ADVANCED AMPHIBIOUS TRAINING BASE
PORT LYAUTEY, FRENCH MOROCCO.

18 May, 1943.

ELDER, William D. (519-514) B.M.2c.

HAS PERMISSION TO BE ABSENT FROM THIS STATION FROM

1600, 18 May, 1943. TO 2000, 18 May, 1943.

FOR PURPOSE OF VISITING PORT LYAUTEY.

H. H. HOWARD, Ens.
Executive Officer, 89

As the weeks went by here at Port Lyuatey, we worked on the ships' equipment, engines, and 20mm guns. The crew was getting shore liberty and rested up, itchy to sail-on. The Tunisia Campaign was into its final stages. The French Navy and troops surrendering, 10 May, thousands of German troops also surrendered. The war in North Africa was drawing to a close. On 28 May, we were alerted to prepare to depart the next morning.

The invasion of North Africa was the first great offensive operation by the United States against Germany. As the operation took shape, it assumed the name of "Torch," in September 1942. It was established for French Morocco on the northern West Atlantic coast, Casablanca area; Algeria Mediterranean Sea coast at Oran and Algiers area to facilitate air and ground operation against the Axis forces. It would extend through Libya in the western desert into Tunisia. Operation "Torch" would comprise as the largest overseas landing force in World History at that time.

The Western Naval Task Force under Admiral Hewitt landed 35,000 troops and 250 tanks under the command of General Patton. General Patton's amphibious landings, 8 November 1942, landed at three locations: Fedhala, Mehedia north of Casablanca and Safi to the south of Casablanca. The coast guard attack transports participating in this force were the *Leonard Wood* and the *Joseph T. Dickman*. The operation was to capture Casablanca, the airfield near Port Lyautey, the Port of Safi and Fedhala by direct assault. Failure of this group, the most important, meant failure of the entire expedition. H-hour was 0400, 8 November 1942.

With the Task Force divided into three attack groups with Rear Admiral Robert C. Griffen, USN into the covering group of one battleship, two cruisers, four screening destroyers, and a tanker for the Northern attack group under Rear Admiral Monroe Kelly, USN, had one battleship, one cruiser, eight attack transports, nine destroyers, a beacon submarine, two aircraft carriers, two minesweepers, and two miscellaneous vessels. The center attack group, commanded by Captain Robert R. M. Emmet, USN on the *Leonard Wood* as his Flagship, with two cruisers, ten destroyers, fifteen attack transports, six minesweepers, two beacon

submarines, one tanker, one air group screen with two carriers. Southern attack group, commanded by Rear Admiral Lyle A. Davidson, USN, with two cruisers, ten destroyers, six attack transports, three minesweepers, two tankers, one beacon submarine, one aircraft carrier, and one ocean tug. All in all, 105 ships included are the attack transports various landing craft. This was the world's largest attack landing force at the time.

The landings came as a complete surprise to the Germany high command. The *Dickman* and *Woods* (LCP)(L) landing craft were landing simultaneously to their assigned beachhead. The landings were a success. Admiral Morrison pays this tribute in his History of Naval Operations: "The best job was done by boats of the Coast Guard - manned *Dickman* on Beach Blue 2 in the estuary of the Wadi Nefifikh, although this was the most difficult beach of all." He made this comment "The value of previous experience in small boat handling was proved by the superior performance of the Coast Guard, who manned the landing craft of USS *Joseph T. Dickman* at Fedhala." The Navy is traditionally a blue-water navy trained for the high seas. What they needed were "White-Water Sailors," men skilled in handling of small boats through the surf and landing them under difficult conditions.

The Task Force was attacked the night of 11 November when three ships were torpedoed. The *Dickman* sent boats to their assistance. The destroyer *Hamblemton* and tank *Winooski* were torpedoed, severely damaging them. Later they made Port of Casablanca. At the same time transport *Joseph Hewes* was torpedoed and sank 50 minuets later. The German submarine U-173 did the torpedoing. Five days later she was attacked by three destroyers; the depth charges severely damaged her and had to surface. The USCG Cutter *Spencer*, at full speed, bore down on the U-175, gunfire battered the sub and the Germans had to abandon ship.

The afternoon of 12 November, three more transports, *Edward Rutledge*, *Hugh L. Scott* and *Tasker H. Bliss*, anchored off Fedhala, were torpedoed by U-130. All three burst into flames. Once again, the *Wood, Dickman* and remaining transports sent their boats to the rescue. About 1000 survivors were taken ashore by the rescue boats. The *Dickman*, *Wood*, and remaining transports got under way leaving their small boats behind to carry on the rescue work. They stayed off shore until the Casablanca harbor opened up and discharged the remainder of their cargo. Both Captain O'Neil, USCG, of The *Leonard Wood* and Captain Harwood, USCG, of *Joseph T. Deckman*, were decorated with the Legion of Merit for their heroic conduct and brilliant leadership.

On 10 November 1942 at 1400 the French had surrendered and a preliminary Armistice meeting took place at General Patton's C.P. (Command Post). It was recorded that Patton offered the French generous terms. He did not want to discredit them in the eyes of the Arabs. He allowed them to keep their arms with the promise that they would no longer fight.

While the above Atlantic Task Force Group landing was taking place, the Mediterranean Eastern and Western Naval Task Force was simultaneously carrying out their beachhead landings, a joint campaign with the British.

The Mediterranean Sea Operation was to be the responsibility of the British Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, Royal Navy, along with being the "Commander of the entire "Torch" "Operation." The Eastern Navy Task Force was under commander of Rear Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough, R.N, with Algiers as the objective. The Oran Operation was under Commodore Thomas Troubridge, R.N.

The attack transport *Samuel Chase,* Coast Guard-manned commanded by Commander Roger C. Heimer, USCG, and the three attack transport Navy-manned Captain Olten R. Bennehoff, USN, *Thomas Stone,* Lieutenant Commander Duncan Cook, USNR, *Leedstown,* and Captain Chester L. Nichols, USN, the *Almack,* carried the U.S. Contingent troops for the East Assault Force with Major General Charles W. Rider, USA, in command. There were 72,000 officers and men. 49,000 by U.S. Army and 23,000 were furnished by the British Army put ashore in the Algeria assault area. The convoy consisted of 37 vessels.

The fast moving convoy had moved through the Straights of Gibraltar without being attacked by submarines. As the convoy steamed east in the Mediterranean Sea, the Oran Group separated from the rest and headed for its destination. The rest of Task Force continued on, consisting of 19 vessels, among was the *Chase.*

The morning of 7 November, off Cape Palos, Spain the group suffered its first attack. The transport *Thomas Stone* took a torpedo hit on her port side damaging her propeller and rudder. She was forced to drop out of the convoy. Another torpedo just missed the *Samuel Chase*. The *Stone*'s 800 officers and men with their equipment, comprising of three assault waves, were taken aboard the HMS *Corvette Spay*. Two destroyers and an ocean tug boat were dispatched out of Gibraltar to retrieve her. She was towed to anchorage off Algiers 11 November after the fighting.

On 8 November, after midnight, *Chase* and *Almack* started to launch their boats; *Leedstown* encountered equipment breakdown. The first wave landed on the beach at 0118. Fort Cape Matifou turned its searchlights on the ships and fired their

7 ½ guns. The British destroyer returned the firing on the fort and silenced their guns.

The small boat waves moved in without opposition. The commandos were unsuccessful in taking the Fort Cape Matifou and Fort d' Estrees. These batteries were bombarded by the HMS *Bermuda* and dive bombers from the carrier. Later they marched into the forts. The airdrome at Maison Blanche surrendered at 0827 and soon thereafter allied planes from Gibraltar were using it.

The French troops put up little resistance and the city of Algiers surrendered. Admiral Darlan concluded an oral armistice with the French Navy. Actually, the operation went fairly quiet, however, the Germans took over and the group was subjected to terrific dive bombings and torpedo attack by eight planes. Their targets were the transports. The ships kept at anchor because of their combine anti-aircraft fire.

The escorts went into action. HMS Destroyer *Cowdray* suffered a bomb hit and had to be beached. United States merchant, *Exceller,* carrying equipment received minor damage from a near two bomb miss. The attack transport *Leedstown* that was struck by torpedo destroying her steering gear partly flooding her after section, now a "sitting duck," was attacked again at 1255 by two planes. The three near misses opened seams. Fifteen minutes later she took two torpedoes from a torpedo plane and immediately listed to starboard. Prospect of saving her or unloading more cargo was lost, and the 500 men onboard abandoned her at 1320 on rafts that floated directly towards the beach. Another bombing at 1615 and she slipped under the sea in water 20 fathoms (120 ft.) deep. The coast guardsmen on the beach witnessed the torpedoing of *Leedstown.* Heavy surf was running, but the Coast Guardsmen were waiting to help the survivors that were thrown from the rafts by the final attack. Some of the rafts were hitting the rocks offshore. The Coast Guardsmen swam out in the cold water with lines to tie the rafts together and were able to pull them ashore with the survivors clinging to the rafts. In the surf, the rafts were tossed into the air, dumping the survivors into the water with the rafts hitting them. Without regard for their own safety, the Coast Guard beach party engaged in life saving duty for hours. Finally, all survivors, 480, were pulled to safety, but there were broken bones and shock as they struggled to get to the beach.

The ships fought these attacks gallantly and were able to shoot down three of the eight bombers. For the next five days the *Chase* unloaded its remaining cargo with their surviving boats, much of the time under attack. The *Chase* received a commendation from the British Admiralty for gallantry in action.

Inexperience took its toll in this operation and most of the landing craft were

lost to the increasing surf during the afternoon 8 November. Only 8 boats of the 72, LCMs, LCPs and LCUs remained. Seven of the lost boats belonged to the *Chase.*

The beach parties that handled the cargo performed for long periods without rest. They suffered bombing and strafing attacks on the beach and watched the bombers making it hot for the transports. The continuing increasing surf made conditions very difficult to land the boats. Losses had been suffered by the transports. The *Chase* boats assisted the other transports in unloading.

While action taken place at Algiers, the Center Task Force of British ships were carrying out their assaults on Oran & Arzeu. Army troops landing were mostly Americans. The Arzeu landing areas went very well with little or no opposition. There was some spotty gun firing. As the troops went inland to St. Cloud and Fleurus they had stiff resistance. The resistance near Arzeu stopped by afternoon of 8 November. It took over 36 hours to get the rest of the area under control. The landing further west of Oran came off smoothly. They had little resistance from two forts that were silenced by HMS *Rodney's* bombardment.

The ex-Coast Guard cutters given to the British, renamed the *Hartland* and *Walney*, carrying the anti-sabotage teams of the U.S. soldiers making a raid on Oran Harbor, experienced terrific odds with great courage ended disastrously. Both the *Walney* and *Harland* were sunk. Half of the men on board the *Harland* were killed by point blank gunnery explosions and fire. The next day two French destroyers tried to sortie out of the harbor to fight the British, but were immediately put out of action.

As the inland resistance was brought under control, 10 November, the pincer movement began on Oran's well fortified French position there. Oran surrendered that morning and the troops entered the city.

The beach landings of Operation "Torch" suffered the lost of personnel, boats and equipment, including the unloading of cargo from the transport, to the high surf waves and strong incoming tide currents. This had all the earmarks of what the British Admiral had in mind: To have large sea-going vessels that could run themselves on to the beach to discharge the troops and their cargo on the beach shores. The allies were now in position to deploy such a vessel as the LCI(L)s and LSTs. The successful conquest of North Africa gave the allies this starting point from which they could initiate such attacks against Germany.

CHAPTER 5

MEDITERRANEAN SEA TUNISIA CAMPAIGN

The crew was briskly popping around the ship this morning, anxious to get moving out to our next adventure. 0900 - 28 May, we departed Port Lyautey, quietly sailing outbound with the out-going tide on the Wadi Sebu River. As we sailed along, we again took in the view of destroyed military vehicles on the bank of the river and on the rolling sandy terrain. Soon out the estuary, we were into the Atlantic Ocean's clear blue waters. We took a north by east (012 degrees) heading. The large swells of the ocean made easy sailing.

About 1300, General Quarters sounded. Surprised! We scrambled to our battle stations. After making the guns ready and stations manned, word was passed "This is a drill. Your response was good. Test fire all 20mm guns." We fired our gun, unloading a magazine round. The magazine held 20 rounds of bullets loaded, in order: a red tracer, metal piercing, and explosive contact shells.

Standing high alert watch for U-boats attack with posted lookouts, bow, stern, and fly bridge, we slipped thru the straights of Gibraltar. The crew was very tense. It was a dark night. A few times someone would shout "torpedo port side 330 degrees," etc., taken in by a porpoise swimming in towards the ship to play in the ships bow wake. The phosphorus was very strong here in the Mediterranean Sea. As the porpoise would swim, he would leave a white phosphorescent line. Never before had we experienced phosphorus radiating such light in the water. Our wake could be seen for a half a mile or more. It concerned me for, if we would be attacked by bomber planes, they could line up on our radiant phosphorus wake for their bomb and strafing run. A chilling feeling.

Checking my watch 0135, I was thankful there were no U-boat attacks as we approached the Straights as we sailed east into the Mediterranean. We were disappointed that we didn't get to see the "Big Rock." Maybe upon our return we'd see it if we were still able to navigate by it.

Around 1500 - 30 May our group (12-LCI's) sailed into Port Nermours, Algeria. The other group sailed on to Oran, Algeria. Nermours was a small fishing port. Very picturesque. Green vegetation with trees. It was a neat little harbor. Several small fishing boats were sailing into the harbor along with us. Wouldn't

you know! Chatlain, our Cajun shipmate, hailed one of the fishing boats to come along-side our ship. Captain Fabian was having fits with this boat coming along side of us. Chatlain called out to the captain on the fly bridge, "They are OK. I'm getting some fresh fish for us." Captain, little reluctant, slowed down the ship. Chatlain came up with a woven basket, about the size of our bushel basket, full of fish 12" to 16" long. I had no idea what kind of fish they were. They looked something like our trout. Needless to say, we had lots of help to clean the fish. Cookie Zak made us a delicious fish dinner.

Six LCI's tied up at the dock with the others rafting up along side. Soon two Army officers and a Sergeant MP came on board. Later, I was summons to the wardroom. I was put in charge of the shore patrol (SP) along with Lt JG Hilton. I was not expecting anything like this. I had no experience with SP work.

I found out that Mr. Hilton would be in charge and I would handle the personnel assigned to the SP duty. I would work with the Sergeant checking our patrols (MP & SP). We would patrol the area in their jeep checking our patrol men on duty. He and I would make an appearance into the Cafés making sure everything was in order with the American personnel. I did this for three afternoons, 1200 to 1800. After the curfew hour, we would check the area for any stragglers. The patrol men would then be dismissed from their duty.

After curfew and the patrols secured, Mr. Hilton and I were guests of the Army for dinner with drinks and good conversation. I enjoyed this and learned a lot about the occupation here in Algeria. It was an interesting experience.

After leaving Port Nemours, we sailed over to Port Arzeu, Algeria, just west of Oran, a training base center for the Italy invasion we thought. As sailor crews, we were never told what was going on or what was in store for our future operation until we were under way.

Over the next six weeks our flotilla underwent intensive training with Army personnel. We would land the soldiers on beaches along the Algeria and Tunisia coasts and shuttle them up and down the coast from Oran to Mestaganem, Cherchell, Algiers, Algeria, to Berzerta, Ferryville, (now known as Mezel Bourguiba), Tunis and Sousse, Tunisia. Sometimes they would be loaded for transportation and spend a night on board as we would sail them to an eastern port.

When we were in Port Oran & Port Algiers we would get liberty. One day my shipmate friend, gunny Vaughan and I were walking down a street in Oran and an Army jeep came up to a street we just crossed, and turned into the street, hit Vaughan, knocking him down. I heard a crack. It was Vaughan's leg. It was broken.

The Army guys loaded him on the hood of the jeep and we rushed him off to the Army hospital. The guys drove me back to the ship. I made a report to the OD (Officer of the Day) Mr. Howard, LTJG, our Exec. Officer.

The next morning, we departed Port Oran and I never saw Vaughan after that. Under our operation in this war you just moved on. It's hard to handle these things, but you learned to get past it. As a matter of fact, I'm rather callused today when things like this happen.

Another time I was in Algiers with three shipmates and we stopped at a U. S. approved Café Restaurant to get something to eat. What they were serving was some kind of stew, so, we ordered up. It was served and looked really good. It was tasty and the meat was good. One of the guy's spoke up, "Wonder where they got the beef?"

I said, "Beef! This is horse meat".

He said, "What! How do you know?"

"It has a course grain to the meat with a red color. My dad would get horse meat and have the cook at the restaurant cook it up and add old bread to it making dog food for his bird dogs (in the days before they made and sold dog food). I use to taste it and dad showed me the difference between the beef and horse meat."

I learned a lot about meat. I was raised around my dad's restaurant, and my mother's people were farmers and did a lot of beef and pig butchering. The horse meat is OK, a little tough. It is very similar to buffalo meat, course grain with a red color. However, buffalo meat is a lot tenderer than horse meat. It has more fat in it. I told them that here you could be eating lamb, goat, horse, and dog meat. I finished my meal. They did not finish their meals.

We could go over to the Attack Transports after evening chow and take in a movie and visit their ship's store to buy candy and etc. We just carried tobacco, soap, and toothpaste in our ship stores.

The first night I came aboard the Navy Attack Transport--I do not remember its name--I got some candy and took in the movie. The next night they were showing a different movie so I went over to see it. When I boarded her, a sailor came up to me and said, "Are you Bill Elder?" I looked at him and recognized him right away: Russell Bubb from my home town of Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania! I hadn't seen Russell for several years.

He said, "I thought it was you I saw last evening; but I was not sure. So I was looking to see if you would be coming over this evening."

I spent the evening visiting with him. It was a great surprise to meet a home

town friend. His people were farmers. Their farm was just outside of town. The next time I saw Russell was back in J. S. after the War. His brother Albert and I were classmates in high school, class of '40, and played together on the varsity football team. Russell was in the class of '39.

The morning of 8 June, we took on a battalion of Rangers and transported them to Bizerte, Tunisia. We arrived at Bizerte on 11 June and the Rangers disembarked. Bizerte became our base of operation. There was very little left of the city. It had been bombed and shelled out. However, the harbor bay was very large with Ferryville to the south of the bay. Many ships were at anchor in the bay, maybe 100 of different classes, navy cruisers, destroyers, mine sweepers, attack transports, tankers, LCTs, LCI's and merchant supply ships--quite an armada of ships.

Here, that first night, we experienced our first bombing raid. They had large search lights to spot the bombers, the attack guns filling the air with tracers and explosive projectile shells. Some of the planes would be hit and burst into fire and plummet to earth. Others would be flying off flaming and smoking. Their bombs did very little damage.

My helmet was not large enough to protect me from the falling metal shrapnel fragments falling down. The shrapnel came in many sizes with sharp edges. It could tear your flesh. We would be at general quarters during these raids. The metal falling was a problem. You could hear it hit the water, "Ca - chunk ca - chunk!" and "bang," hitting the ship. Sometimes someone would get hit. It was mean stuff.

On the morning of 6 July 0400, we had one of our biggest bomber raids. Seven German bombers, JU88's, were shot down. They did some damage to some of the ships. These air raids were nightly occurrences. Some nights there would be two or three raids. We would be called to G.Q. stations during these raids. The Germans were putting a lot of bombardment pressure here in Bizerte Bay on the accumulated anchored ships.

On 3 July morning, we left Port Bizerte, 6 LCI's with a battalion of British soldiers transporting them to Sousse, Tunisia. At 1400 that afternoon we landed them on a beach south of Sousse. We then anchored about half a mile off the beach cove. It was so hot we had to flood the decks with water from the fire hydrant outlets to keep the deck cooled off. There was a south wind blowing pumping the heat off the desert right onto us. The swimming party was on. We rigged up the boarding ladder and diving board. You could dive or jump in the water anytime you wanted to cool off. The temperature in the engine room was 118 degrees. It was

hot! Hot!

When the British soldiers got on the beach they made their tea. Rested up then marched off. Early that evening, 1900, we weighed anchor and returned back to Bizerte. We arrived the next morning 4 July in time for the real nightly fireworks.

It was evident that the allies were preparing for an invasion here in the Mediterranean area soon. Intensive military movement has been going on the last few weeks. The Navy war ships and supply ships assembled at Oran, Algiers, Bizerte, and Sousse with a build-up of equipment and material needed for such attack, was intensive. At this time, we could only imagine the full extent of the invasion, when and where it would take place.

Allies felt the need to maintain the momentum drive that campaign "Torch" carried in North Africa offensive across the Mediterranean to Europe. The "Torch" campaign had forestalled the Germans in crossing the Straits of Gibraltar into Spain preventing their controlling the passage into the Mediterranean Sea. The "Husky" Campaign was then advanced, targeting the Sicily invasion as a stepping stone into Europe. July was picked for the favorable period of the moon. It helped the dropping of the airborne troops in the light of the moon with the dark set later the under cover of darkness for amphibious assault landings.

The remarkable United States construction program offered an historical feat, it's launching of assault amphibious craft LCI's, LCT's, and LSTs. They would get their test under actual battle conditions. They sailed across the Atlantic several months in advance of the assault on Sicily, training with the troops along the African Northern Mediterranean coast. The soldiers become well aware of these flat riding vessels.

To confuse the Axis Forces and cancel the strength of Patton's invasion forces at headquarters, seaside city of Mestghanem, Algeria, continued to carry the I Armored Corps (Big Red One) reinforcement. The British command absorbed Patton's I Army under Alexander's along with Montgomery's Eighth Army to be known as the 15th Army Group. Alexander's Army Group was now to be known as 15th Army "Force 141", adding together Montgomery's Eight and Patton's Seventh Armies. Not until the invasion forces sail from Northern Africa would the identity be dropped for security in the planning of the Sicilian invasion.

The plan is for simultaneous landings by the British with five divisions to

land on a 60-mile front rounding the Pachino Peninsula up the eastern shore to Syracuse; Patton will land with four divisions across 37 miles on the crescent shaped south shores of the Gulf of Gela. The primary task in Corps planning will be the fitting of troops with vehicles and tonnage supplies for the three American beach heads; namely, Cent, Dime, and Joss. Altogether the allies will assemble 3,200 sea vessels. Two thousand will take part in the American assault in the Gulf of Gela.

The Operation that "Husky" would become the greatest amphibious force ever undertaken up to that point of WWII. The American forces, and the Western Task Force, assembled and sailed from Oran, Algiers, Bezerte and Tunis, while the British forces, The Eastern Task Force assembled and sailed from Benghazi, Alexandria, Port Said, Haifa, and Beirut.

Troops boarding Flotilla Four LCI(L)'s at Bizerte, Tunisia, for the invasion of Sicily.
(U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

CHAPTER 6

OPERATION "HUSKY" SICILIAN INVASION

The mornings bring little charm after being up most of the night with heavy bombing here in the Lake of Bizerte. The Axis keep pressure on the accumulation of ships anchored in the lake's bay. Amazing! They do very little damage to these ships, about 200 or more. We shoot down five or more of their bombers, JU-88's, every night, using large spotlights on these German planes. It makes quite a show. Ak-ak guns firing, shells bursting, red tracer bullets along with the spotlight beam moving across the night sky back and forth on the planes, with a plane here and there bursting into flames or flying off burning. Then we have the shrapnel raining down on us.

This morning, 8 July, is different. We find ourselves busy receiving soldiers with their full equipment packs—"The Big Red One," now known as the 7th Army's 3rd Infantry division. They brought their "K-rations" in cases. I had to make up a cargo rope net to hold the cases in place in the bulwarks. As I was working on the net, I was thinking this could be the real thing, "invasion"—but where?

As the soldiers got settled in, we made preparations to sail. Our flotilla got underway around 1400, sailing out of Port Bizerte. The sea was calm, our course was on a northeasterly bearing. Later, before sunset, we joined a very large convoy steaming eastward. The convoy had various types of ships on the horizon, with cruisers and destroyers assembled on the perimeter. I then knew we were an invasion force. The weather was good, a nice romantic sunset reflecting on the water's surface. A beautiful evening, picture perfect, here on the Mediterranean Sea.

After the evening chow we were briefed on our destination for the invasion attack force. It was Sicily's southern shores, in the Gulf of Gela, the landing area for the Western Naval Attack Force. Our LCI flotilla was assigned to the Joss Forces, to land our troops on Blue Beach, just east of Licata. Lt. Commander Unger, USCG, aboard 89, in command of the first wave of LCI's. A British submarine, HMS *Safire*, with a blue light at water's surface facing seaward, will give us our bearing to the marked beach. The blue light has no connection with our Blue Beach area. The blue light has very little reflection on the water. Time 10 July, H-hour 0245. For security, briefings were given after we were out to sea.

The British landing area for the Eastern Naval Attack Force is the blunt end of the Pachino Peninsula for the Bark Forces, and covering the Gulf of Noto south of Syracuse for the Acid Forces.

The Attack Task Force's routes to Sicily's Gulf of Gela beaches and the Gulf of Noto beaches had to be worked out in great detail so the attack groups would not interfere with each other. The three American forces, Joss, Dime, and Cent, and one of the British forces, Bark, approaching from the west, had to use well-spaced intervals that would steam east through a ten-mile wide area off the northern coast of Tunisia protected by mine fields, called the Tunisian War Channel. Then some of the convoy forces would steam south and west. The other British force, Acid, coming from sea ports Sousse and Stox, Tunisia, and Alexandria and Port Said, Egypt, also would steam west. These forces would later converge south of the island of Malta, hoping this routing would convince the Axis reconnaissance planes that the invasion target would be east of Sicily.

The Mediterranean forces were predominantly Americans, British, and Canadians. It was the British and Americans who planned these campaigns for a successful conclusion. Their success in North Africa-Operation Torch-was the beginning of the Mediterranean Theater for the Western Allies. The combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) decided to occupy Sicily, securing the Mediterranean Sea by air and sea. Not only would it do that, but it would also divert the Germans into a second front, increasing the pressure on Italy. The CCS session issued a directive to launch Operation Husky Force for Sicily with a target date July 1943.

The naval commander for Operation Husky was Admiral Sir Andrew B. Conningham, RN. Directly under him for the Western Task Forces was Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, USN, and Admiral Sir Bertran H. Ramsay, RN, for the Eastern Task Forces.

The CCS planning group made a very bold plan: No other amphibious operation with so broad a front—100 coastal miles, landing eight reinforced divisions abreast—had ever been tried, nor was it ever tried again. Historians recorded it as the "Greatest Amphibian Operation." Sicilian war history records numerous amphibious landings through the ages.

Admiral Hewitt broke his flag on the USS *Monrovia*, attack troop transport (A.T.T.), commanding the Western Naval Task Force with 580 ships of all types *(see silhouette page)* and 1,124 landing craft vehicle and personnel (LCVP's) ship-borne to land the 7th Army's 228,000 soldiers under the command of General Patton, USA. The general sailed on the *Monrovia* with Admiral Hewitt and his staff.

Admiral Ramsey broke his flag aboard the *Antwerp*, commanding the Eastern

"Coast Guardsman William D. Elder, boatswain's mate first class, of Jersey Shore, is serving with a Coast Guard-manned LCI (landing craft infantry) flotilla which participated in the first Allied landings on Sicily. Elder is shown here supervising rigging a cargo net while an Army sergeant checks rations."
(Coast Guard press release)

DD—Destroyer

DE—Escort Vessel

AGC—Amphibious Force Flagship

AKA—Attack Cargo Ship

APA—Attack Transport

APD—High Speed Transport

LSD—Dock Landing Ship

LSM—Medium Landing Ship

LSMR—Medium Landing Ship (Rocket)

LST—Tank Landing Ship

LCI—Landing Craft–Infantry

PCE—Escort (180')

PCS—Submarine Chaser (136')

PF—Patrol Escort

AGB—Icebreaker

AD—Destroyer Tender

ADG—Degaussing Vessel

AF—Store Ship

AE—Ammunition Ship

AH—Hospital Ship

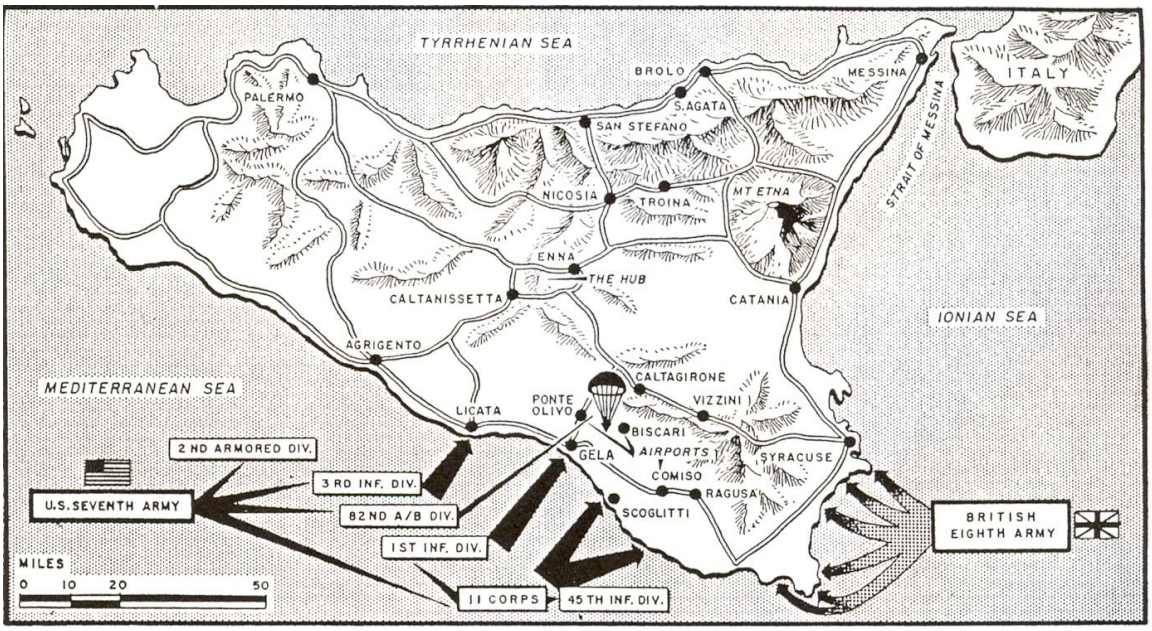
AO—Oiler

AP—Transport

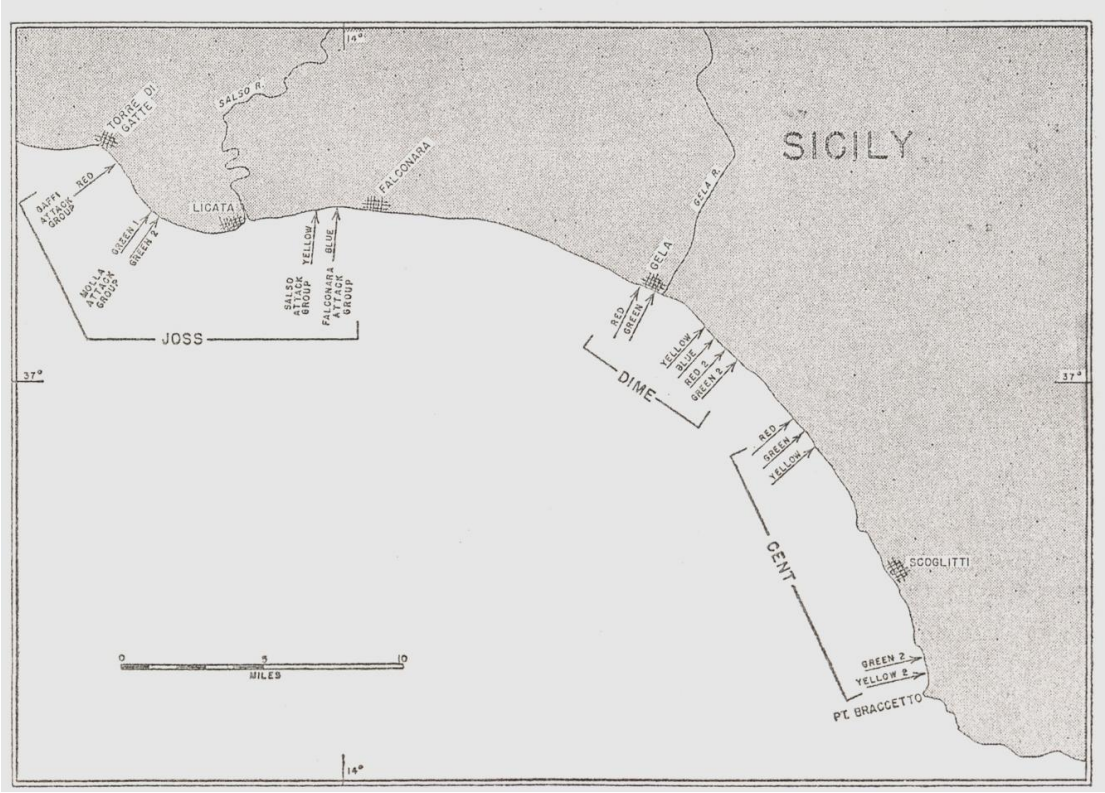
AR—Repair Ship

ARB—Battle Damage Repair Ship

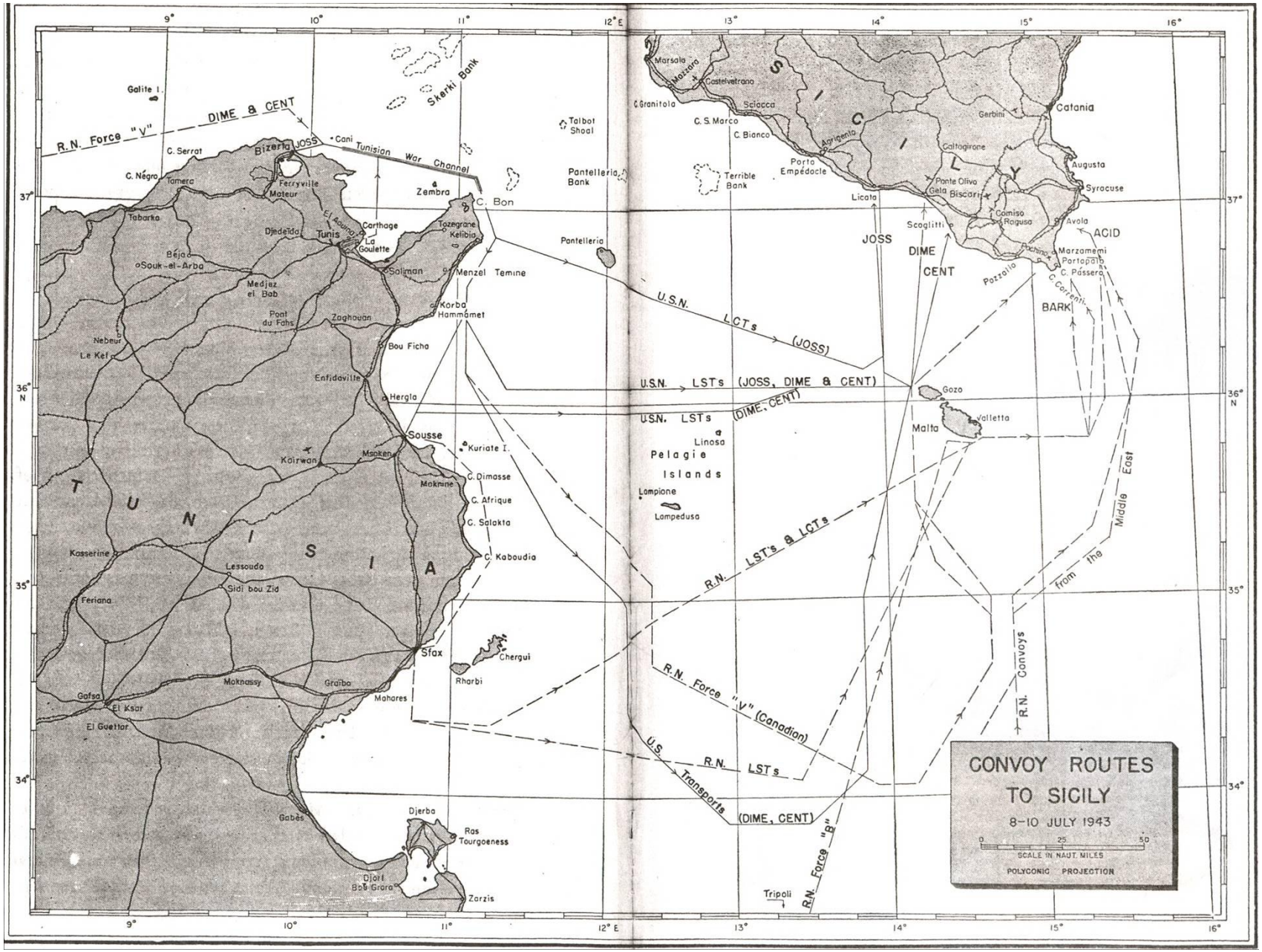
SILHOUETTES OF ASSAULT CRAFT



Map of Sicily landings.



American landings in Sicily.


CONVOY ROUTES
TO SICILY
8-10 JULY 1943
SCALE IN NAUT. MILES
POLYCONIC PROJECTION
R.N. Force "V" DIME & CENT
JOSS
Cani
Tunisian War Channel
Skerki Bank
Galite I.
C. Serrat
Bizerta
C. Négro
Tamera
Ferryville
Moteur
Zembra
C. Bon
Talbot Shoal
Pantelleria Bank
Tabarka
Djedeida
Tunis
El Aouina
Carthage
La Goulette
Tozegrane
Kelibia
Pantelleria
Béja
Souk-el-Arba
Soliman
Menzel Temime
Medjez el Bab
Pont du Fahs
Zaghouan
Korba
Hammamet
Nebeur
Le Kef
Bou Ficha
Enfidaville
Hergla
Sousse
Kairwan
Msaken
Kuriate I.
C. Dimasse
Mahdia
C. Afrique
G. Salakta
C. Kaboudia
TUNISIA
Kasserine
Lessouda
Sidi bou Zid
Feriana
Sfax
Chergui
Rharbi
Maknassy
Graiba
Gafsa
El Ksar
Mahares
El Guettar
Gabès
Djerba
Ras Tourgoeness
Djorf
Bab Grara
Zarzis
U.S.N. LCTs (JOSS)
U.S.N. LSTs (JOSS, DIME & CENT)
U.S.N. LSTs (DIME, CENT)
Linosa
Pelagie Islands
Lampione
Lampedusa
R.N. LST's & LCT's from the Middle East
R.N. Force "V" (Canadian)
U.S. Transports
R.N. LSTs
(DIME, CENT)
R.N. Convoys
R.N. Force "B"
Tripoli
Marsala
Mazzara
Castelvetrano
C. Granitola
Sciacca
C. S. Marco
C. Bianco
Terrible Bank
Agrigento
Porto Empédocle
Licata
Scoglitti
Pozzallo
Gela
Ponte Oliva
Biscari
Caltagirone
Gerbini
Catania
Augusta
Syracuse
Comiso
Ragusa
Avola
Marzamemi
Portopalo
C. Passero
C. Correnti
JOSS
DIME
CENT
ACID
BARK
Gozo
Malta
Valletta
SICILY
9°
10°
11°
12° E
13°
14°
15°
16°
37°
36° N
35°
34°

Naval Task Forces with 758 ships and 715 LCVP's ship-borne to land the British and Canadian 8th Army's 250,000 soldiers under the command of General Montgomery, HMA.

The Operation "Husky" was an undertaking of great magnitude. Measured by assault strength, it broke all records for amphibious assaults; even the Normandy landings exceeded it only when the follow-up arrangements of combat troop units, a series of waves after the initial assault, are counted. The operation was part ship-to-shore, made possible by the new Technique Landing Crafts, large beaching vessels with capabilities to carry a reinforced division of 25,000 and their equipment transported over seas and land them upon beach shores. There were Landing Ship-Tanks (LST), 1,500 ton, 328 ft.; Landing Craft-Mechanized (LCM/LCT), 550 ton, 112 ft.; and Landing Craft-Infantry (Large) (LCI(L)), 200 ton, 158 ft. These craft were first used extensively in the "Husky" assault operation on Sicily's 100 mile beachfront.

The three American Attack Forces landing beach areas were:

- Licata: "Joss Force," our landing group, commanded by Rear Admiral Conolly, USN, flag aboard the USS *Biscayen*, Attack Troop Transport (ATT) to land the 3rd Infantry Division and a Ranger Battalion under Major General Trescott, USA, aboard ATT's and a group of new landing craft. Their fire support came from the cruisers *Brooklyn* and *Birmingham*, and eight destroyers.
- Gala: "Dime Force," commanded by Rear Admiral Hall, USN, flag aboard the USS *Samuel Chase*, ATT (Coast Guard-manned), landing the 1st Infantry Division, one Combat Team, 2nd Armor Division, and a Ranger battalion under Major General Allen, USA, aboard ATT's and a group of new landing craft. Their fire support came from the cruiser *Savannah*, and 13 destroyers.
- Scoglitti: "Cent Force," commanded by Rear Admiral Kirk, USN, flag aboard the USS *Ancon*, ATT, with General Bradley, USA, landing the 45th Infantry Division under Major General Middleton, USA, aboard ATT's and a group of new landing craft. Their fire support came from the cruiser *Philadelphia*, and 16 destroyers.
- North Africa: "Floating Reserve Force," commanded by Captain Reed, USN, transporting two combat teams of the 2nd Armored Division under Major General Griffey, USA, and a 1st Infantry Division to operate with the Dime Force. The 9th Infantry Division was also ready to be deployed.

The Western Naval Task Force landed the American 7th Army Assault Forces under the command of General Patton on a 37-mile beachfront off of Sicily's Gulf

of Gila. Here the troops secured the beach for their "Sally" ports, using amphibious Crafts (LCT's) with pontoon causeways to receive their heavy armor, supplies and troop reinforcements from the LST's, a system worked out beforehand to unload them at shallow waters off the beach. The naval floating gunfire supported their target objectives inland.

The Eastern Naval Task Force landed the British and Canadians 8th Army Assault Force under the command of General Montgomery on a 60-plus mile beachfront off of Pachino Peninsula, on the Americans' right flank, extending north off the Gulf of Norta. Beyond lay the Pachino Plain area with hills, and Syracuse and Augusta beyond.

As I came on watch this morning, 0800 9 July, I could feel the modest breeze holding on to my hat, and hearing the sea waves, 3 to 4 feet, slipping against the port bow quarter. After taking over my watch on the bridge, I checked the wind velocity. It was 20 knots, a moderate breeze. About two hours into my watch the wind had picked up and the old girl started to pound and roll, with the waves making it uncomfortable for the soldiers. Zak had made breakfast for the soldiers, all 210 of them—powdered eggs, fried spam from the soldiers' K-rations, and pancakes with syrup. Their breakfast was now feeding the fish. I felt badly for the soldiers getting sea-sick, vomiting and getting very nauseated. I never got sea sick, so I don't know how it feels.

Coming off watch, the winds had picked up to 25 knots and the sea waves were building up to five feet. Through the afternoon the winds got up to 30 knots, gale winds, with seas building up to eight feet. The soldiers were becoming very miserable, cooped up in the troop compartments. They could not get on deck due to the waves washing across the deck. The seas were whipped into fury by the wind. Our officers were getting very concerned about the rising seas with the Army personnel aboard. The Army officers worried about landing on the beach with the heavy surf turbulence for the men with their full equipment.

Even the barrage balloons were having trouble with the wind and the rolling ships. The ships' rolling bobbled the balloons wildly, with the gusty wind snapping their cables and the balloons floating away. The famous war combat reporter Ernie Pyle was aboard the USS *Monrovia*, and he described the scene in this excerpt from his book "Brave Men": "The infantry-carrying assault crafts would disappear completely into the wave-troughs as we watched them. The next moment they would be carried so high they seem to leap clear out of the water…..During the worst of the blow we hoped and prayed that the weather would moderate by dusk. It didn't."

On watch again at 2000, I noted our compass heading was north. Checking with Lou, Chief Quartermaster, in the chart room, we're now approaching the island of Malta.

Under cover of darkness, the convoy started to split up to form into their respective assault forces. This was done under such weather conditions--the night was pitch black, the seas looked like deep dark holes, strong wind singing through the mast yardarms lines, high seas washing across our decks--made the maneuver very difficult and dangerous. It was performed in a thorough manner, each starting at specified times: the first, Dime Force, followed by Cent Force, then our Joss Force last with its 276 ships. There were some stragglers, but the Force proceeded as scheduled. Fortunately, around 2300 the winds began to moderate and the high seas subsided as we steamed towards our target beaches. Getting closer to land put us in the lee of the winds, helping to knock down the high seas.

Coming off watch at 0015, 10 July, I stopped to see Lou in the chart room.

"Hi Lou! We are getting closer to Sicily?"

"Yea! We are about 25 miles off the coast. We need some help getting these seas to subside."

"They seem to be laying down now. I'm concerned we will have trouble with the ramps getting jammed into the sand with the heavy wave surge moving the ship up and down possibly twisting the ramps so that the soldier can't get off. Should we get enemy gunfire, it could become utter chaos. Well good luck, Lou. Cross your fingers. See you after we get off the beach hopefully."

"Yea! Good luck to you. See you later."

Around 0100, the Joss Force attack transports and cargo ships struggled with the seas to their anchoring about six miles paralleling the beach off Licata. The LCI's lay astern off these ships, the cruisers, *Brooklyn* and *Birmingham*, on the flanks with their gunfire support. We were close enough to the shore to see the fires burning from the air force bombing the day before. To the east of us, the anti-aircraft defense ashore around Gela opened up with terrific force. No chance of surprising the enemy. We felt any moment the shore guns would discover our presence, adding to the crew's worries. Later we learned it was directed against the airborne paratroops landing.

Our Joss Attack Group's objectives on four difference beaches were:

- "Gaffi" Group-Red Beach: 7th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) with the 3rd Infantry Division landing five miles west of Licata to secure the Joss' western flank.
- "Molla" Group-Two Green Beaches: 3rd Ranger Battalion and 2nd Battalion of the 15th RCT west of Monta Sole bluff to take Licata

- "Solso" Group-Yellow Beach: 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 15th RCT landing a mile south of the mouth of the Solso River for a pincer movement on Licata and take the strong points on Mt. Gallord.
- "Falconara" Group-Blue Beach: 30th RCT landing to take the strong point Punta Due Rocchi east of the beach, and take Mt. Desusino to secure the strong points at the eastern flank and merge with the Cent Attack Forces.

These target areas extended some 15 miles, across the beaches of the small city of Licata. The landing beaches were sandy soil with rocky areas and low cliffs.

The attack transports were lowering their small ship-borne boats (LCVP's) and loading the soldiers into them. At 0125 we started for the beach as scheduled. The British submarine HMS *Safire* was able to assist us on our heading for the beach. It was pitch black, the moon had set, but you knew where the beach was by seeing the bombarding shells hitting inland ahead of us. Our beach was not marked, but Mt. Desusino silhouetted against the star-lit sky made a good bearing point for Captain Fabian to land in our designated beach area. Our mission was to land the troops in the designated area they were briefed to attack. The operation's wave timing for the landing is critical, putting pressure on our captain.

Under darkness, in unfamiliar waters, we had hushed tension on final approach, everything ahead of us uncertain, possibly getting stuck on a shingle or sandbar or broaching in the heavy surf, all accountable, the soldiers unable to disembark. The sound of the sea surf, the sound of the ship's engines, the throbbing of our hearts, the beach shrouded in darkness—then the sound of the stern anchor being dropped, the cable running out, the sound of "89" sliding upon the sandy shore at 0255.

The surf was not a factor for us. More sounds: the ramps sliding out onto the beach, the commotion of the soldiers moving across the deck and scrambling down the ramps into the knee-deep water, successfully getting ashore and disappearing into the darkness. We could hear the gunfire as we backed off the beach.

Retracting our ramps and winching off the beach with our anchor, we started to encounter machinegun fire, hear small field guns and mortar fire, with their shells hitting the water around us. Over our heads we could feel the concussion of the naval gun shells going inland to silence these pillboxes and strong gun points. Fortunately we escaped unharmed as we sailed back to the transport roadstead to help support the anti-aircraft defenses.

As the morning light progressed, a mist moved in, making it difficult to sight targets. Throughout the day the naval fire supporting the troops was intermittent. There were numerous enemy air attacks, high-bombing and dive-bombing and

strafing runs on naval and transports forces. Little damage was done to the ships, but the Axis were losing planes on every attack.

Due to the storm some of the LCT's were late in landing at our Blue beach, but that didn't affect the infantry movement. All divisions of artillery landed and got into position before they were needed.

Later in the afternoon we learned that our beaches, Yellow and Blue, were the best beaches for night landings. The sand was hard and well-packed for the armored vehicles. The south-west highway and railroad ran very close to the beach, and the farm fields helped the advance of the troops with their equipment. We also found out that the scout boat for marking our Blue beach did not arrive on time to mark it.

Joss Beaches

"Gaffi" Group:

The Red Beach landings were rough, exposed to the westerly winds and heavy surf. They did an outstanding job landing under machinegun and artillery fire, with some casualties, despite their late approaches at 0410. As the landings were going on they were attacked by Axis bombers.

The Army found pillboxes abandoned but the machine gunners were blazing away at them until they were silenced. The inland artillery made it hostile on the landings. The destroyer *Buck* went into action, targeting these batteries and silencing them. At the same time the remaining late LCT's sailed into the beaches under a smoke screen laid down by the destroyers *Edison* and *Bristol* to screen the beaches from enemy gunfire and bombing raids.

The troops landing five miles west of Monte Sole secured the western flank by taking the strong gun points in the area around the highway and railroad northwest of Licata.

"Molla" Group:

The Green Beaches also encountered the strong winds with heavy surf where the upstanding rocks separated the two Green pocked beaches at the western bottom-end of Monte Sole. The darkness made it difficult to locate them as they approached the high bluff in the roaring surf. The 2nd Ranger Battalion, carried on two British transports deployed by the Princess, sailed into these rocky shore pockets and landed at 0300. The British sailors smartly handled their boats in that dangerous heavy surf.

The Rangers pushed ahead through barbed wire, accepting the surrendering

Italian troops as they moved along the edge of Monte Sole to take the strong gun point holding the road. At dawn they entered the suburbs of Licata without their vehicles.

The Army's 2nd Battallioni of the 15th R.C.T. 3rd Division landed at 0340 in the LCVP's from six LST's. They moved up the crest of Monte Sole as a support group for a counter-attack to assist the Rangers. Some of the LCT's had trouble with the sandbar before hitting the beach. One of them hit hard on the sandbar and broached due to the heavy surf. The soldiers were able to get off, and after daylight it was salvaged.

"Solso" Group:

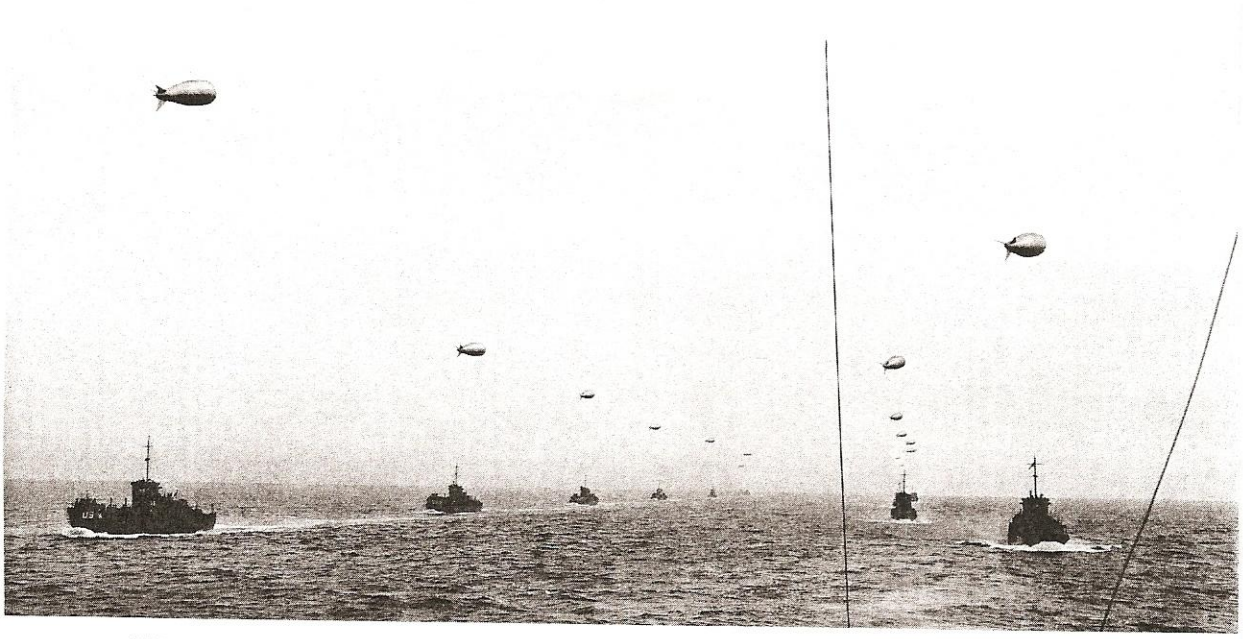
They landed on the Yellow Beach in the lee of the westerly winds, on a hard sand beach three hundred yards east of the Solso River. Licata Peninsula gave them protection from the wind, and with light surf they had a good landing to disembark the troops and their vehicles. The landings were uncontested for the Army's 1st and 3rd Battallions of the 15th R.C.T. Moving inland they found the enemy's beach command post abandoned. In clearing the defenses they received light machinegun fire and seized a good position across the road. The 1st Battalion went straight to its objective, a coastal defense battery off Saffarello Hill, and seized it at 0800. Half of the battalion continued on for the pincer move on Licata. With Licata now under Ranger control, they were then ordered to ford the Solso River and march into Licata to prevent the enemy from blowing up the bridge over the river.

Surprise here kept the enemy off-guard, and there was little resistance. The Army located a strong gun point near the railroad, and the destroyer *Bristol*, one of the three destroyers standing by after dawn, steamed off shore a distance so it could pummel the spot with five-inch shells.

The late LCT's destined for the beach started to arrive at 0800 and discharged their vehicles. In a system worked out before the invasion, they then married up to the LST's to make a causeway back to the beach from the LST for unloading their tanks and equipment, creating a port for the LST's in the shallow waters.

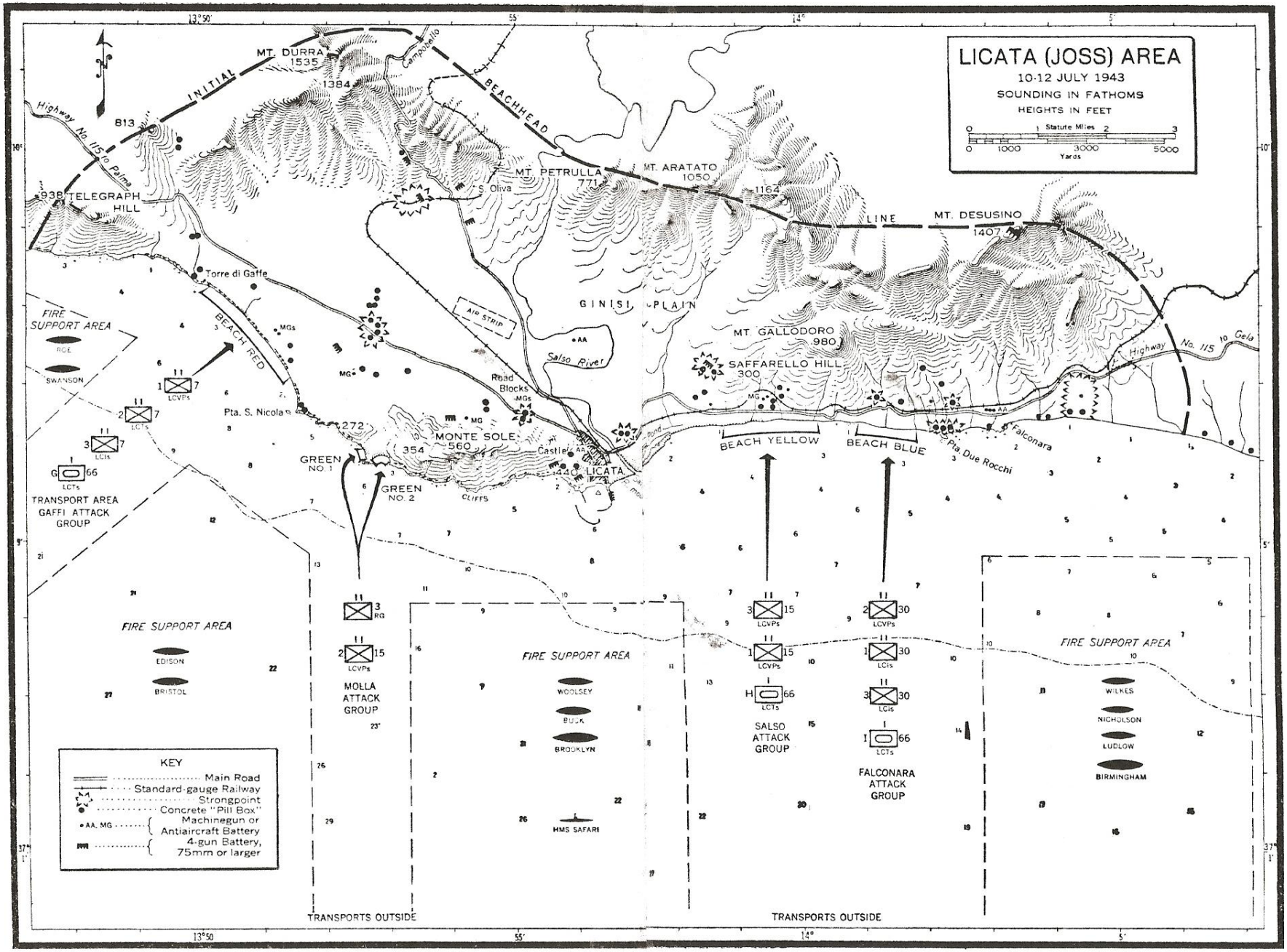
"Falconara" Group:

The Blue Beaches, our group landing, received enemy fire from machineguns and field artillery, along with mortar shells landing in the water and failing to affect



THE LCI FLOTILLA MOVES IN TOWARD SICILY . . . . these Coast Guard-manned vessel are flying barrage balloons to foil possible enemy strafing.

BOMB POCKED WATERS OFF SICILY DURING THE INVASION . . . . Army contingents from this transport were hitting the beach as a Coast Guard combat photographer took this picture.


LICATA (JOSS) AREA
10-12 JULY 1943
SOUNDING IN FATHOMS
HEIGHTS IN FEET
0 1 Statute Miles 2 3
0 1000 3000 5000
Yards
INITIAL
BEACHHEAD
LINE
MT. DURRA
1535
1384
813
Campobello
Highway No. 115 to Palma
938 TELEGRAPH HILL
MT. PETRULLA
771
S. Oliva
MT. ARATATO
1050
1164
MT. DESUSINO
1407
Torre di Gaffe
FIRE SUPPORT AREA
RCE
SWANSON
BEACH RED
AIR STRIP
GINISI PLAIN
MT. GALLODORO
980
SAFFARELLO HILL
300
Salso River
Road Blocks
MGs
Pta. S. Nicola
272
MONTE SOLE
354
560
Castle
440
LICATA
GREEN NO. 1
GREEN NO. 2
CLIFFS
BEACH YELLOW
BEACH BLUE
Pta. Due Rocchi
Falconara
Highway No. 115 to Gela
TRANSPORT AREA
GAFFI ATTACK GROUP
FIRE SUPPORT AREA
EDISON
BRISTOL
MOLLA ATTACK GROUP
FIRE SUPPORT AREA
WOOLSEY
BUCK
BROOKLYN
HMS SAFARI
SALSO ATTACK GROUP
FALCONARA ATTACK GROUP
FIRE SUPPORT AREA
WILKES
NICHOLSON
LUDLOW
BIRMINGHAM
TRANSPORTS OUTSIDE
TRANSPORTS OUTSIDE
KEY
Main Road
Standard-gauge Railway
Strongpoint
Concrete "Pill Box"
Machinegun or Antiaircraft Battery
4-gun Battery, 75mm or larger

the landing craft. The enemy's gun batteries on the slopes of Mt. DeSusino controlled the Ginisi Plain (Joss Group) and the Gela Plain (Dime Group). At the break of dawn, the cruiser *Brooklyn* blazed away on these batteries, quickly silencing them with 713 rounds of six-inch shells. The destroyer *Buck* was busy helping the 30th Infantry to advance, firing on their noted targets.

At 0630 the late LCT's started hitting the beach, discharging their soldiers, vehicles, and equipment. Then they married up to the LST's, unable to get upon the beach due to the shallow waters, and formed the pontoon causeway to unload the Army's tanks, heavy vehicles, and equipment. The troops had complete control of the enemy's strong points by 0930 with the help of the naval guns, as the Army identified the targets.

The Joss Force endured countless air attacks—high altitude and dive bombing attacks—throughout the day across this 12-mile beachhead and along the transport roadstead, all with little affect. The only casualty was the minesweeper *Sentinel*, which took a bomb hit on the aft engine room at 0510, while on anti-submarine patrol about 15 miles off the Joss beachhead. Within the hour she endured four more attacks, suffered another hit that flooded the forward engine room, and at 0615 she was dead in the water. The PS-550 came to assist her, rescuing the 51 wounded sailors and the rest of the crew in the heavy seas. The *Sentinel* capsized at 1030, with 10 missing from a ship's compliment of 101.

"Dime" Beaches:

About 17 miles to our east, the Dime Forces encountered tough opposition. Here the paratroops were dropped inland from the beach, a first large-scale air drop for the Americans, arriving in 200 C-47 transport planes dropping the 82nd Airborne Division's 3,400 troops commanded by General Ridgway. Their mission was to capture roads and high ground commanding the plains area. They were dropped earlier, in the light of the moon; the amphibious assault began at 0245, after the moon had set.

The First and Fourth Ranger Divisions had a tough assignment to land on Red and Green beaches, the sides of a projecting steel pier under a cliff at Gela. Landing them were the LCVP's from the *Joseph T. Dickman*, a Coast Guard-manned transport. On their way in, at 0310, the destroyer *Shubrick* extinguished two persistent searchlights with a loud explosion that destroyed the center portion of the Gela pier. At 0315, in heavy surf, the Rangers landed in a cross-fire from two pillboxes, losing most of an entire company. They moved out, captured the pillboxes, and fought their way into Gela, seizing it by 0800.

The Navy LCI's wave followed the Rangers, landing the Army infantry.

Several grounded on false beaches, but were able to float off and make it to the beach. One LCT experienced difficulty unloading their 24 heavy carts loaded with mortar shells, suffering many casualties from machinegun fire and shell-fire. The naval fire support disposed of those batteries as the first light of dawn broke. The battery on Monte San Nicola, with a 149mm gun, held out until noon D+2, when the First Division captured it.

South of the Gela River was the 5000 yards of beach, where Yellow, Blue, Red 2, and Green 2 landed. They, too, had encountered false beaches. The beach and the dunes were of soft sand, making it hard to maneuver equipment and supplies, and the beaches had to be covered with steel matting. They also encountered vehicle mines on the beach and in the dune pathways. The LCVP's from the transports *Barnett* and *Lyons*landed the 26th RCT on Yellow and Blue beaches. LCVP's from the transports *Thurston* and *Stanton* landed the 16th RCT on Red 2 and Green 2. Their first waves hit the beach at 0245 and met no gunfire. But as the other assault waves arrived, they came under heavy fire while discharging their troops. Half of the LCVP's grounded on the false beaches, needing help to get their troops ashore.

Troubles began at the first light of morning. The beaches and dune pathways were heavily mined against vehicles. Trucks, bulldozers, and other vehicles were blown up, and there was mass confusion: break-downs, smashed boats, troops and supplies arriving and struggling over the disabled equipment, soldiers waiting for their vehicles, an ever-growing beachhead, waves of boats that couldn't get in returning to their ships—all of this under enemy gunfire from ashore, ME-109's bombing and strafing, and JU-88's bombing the transports ships' roadstead. One of the LST's on the beach took a bomb hit, exploding below decks and turning it into a raging inferno with ammunition and gas cans exploding, burning fragments raining down all around the beach, soldiers and sailors wounded and perishing.

All day long the dangerous tasks on the beach landing continued: unloading troops, equipment, and supplies, laying the wire roadways, rigging pontoon causeways, while battling both the enemy and strong currents. The D-Day conditions on Dime beaches were very bad as darkness approached.

The troops encountered bitter fighting through the day, with enemy mobile troops and tanks counter-attacking the beachhead. They had little artillery support, though, and the cruiser *Boise* and destroyer *Jeffers* repelled the counter-atack, destroying numerous tanks in the process. Admiral Hewitt ordered the battleship HMS *Abercrombie* to move over from the Cent Forces to assist the Dime Group.

Meanwhile, the destroyer *Maddox* was on submarine patrol about 16 nautical miles outside the force ships' roadstead when it was attacked by a german Stuka dive-bomber. The bomb exploded under her starboard propeller, completely demolishing the stern and setting off the aft magazine compartment. That triggered another blast, and within minutes the *Maddox* rolled over and sank. The tug *Intent* was in the area and searched for survivors. 74 men were rescued, but 210 perished per the *Maddox* report of 15 July 1943.

The light cruiser *U.S.S. Boise*. (U.S. Navy photograph)

The Gela beaches were in a serious condition. The enemy air attacks and countering tank drive, beach congestion, and unloading were problems that held up the advance of our troops. The condition didn't change over the next two days, D+1 and 2. Allied air cover was absent as the Axis kept up the air attacks. Later I talked with some of the guys that were on the Gela Beaches, who said things were hostile and very uncomfortable.

The main burden fell on the naval gunfire, with close coordination between Army and Navy fire direction. The *Savannah* and *Boise* kept watchful eyes on the scene. The destroyers *Shubrick* and *Jeffers* had almost exhausted their five-inch shells; the *Butler* and *Glennon* came in to relieve them early the morning of D+1 (see gunfire chart, July 1943).

It is noted that the effective naval gunfire supporting our troopers here was the first to engage with the army in a land battlefront. This use of naval gunfire as if it were Army corps artillery had been carefully planned between the generals and admirals. Army artillery officers were placed aboard the ships to coordinate the targets with the Navy officers' fire direction center. It was described as a case of "get the Army where it wants to go, when it wants to get there, then support it as far as we can shoot." Previously, when naval gunfire was used to support amphibious landings, enemy troops and vehicles had not been considered acceptable targets. The Navy beach-masters, with fighting close at hand, managed to get the situation on the beach under control. They rebuilt the pontoon causeways under dozens of JU-88 bombing attacks, both on the beach and the transport roadstead. At 1540, D+1, the Liberty ship *Robert Rowan* took a bomb hit in shallow waters close to shore. The firefighting effort failed, ammunition exploded, and she was abandoned. She blew up at 1702 and burned for hours. The fire and smoke made a good

sighting target for the enemy planes.

That night, D+1 and 2, 11-12 July, all hell broke loose for the forces as the Germans staged their heaviest air raids, with parachute flares lighting up the skies and tracer bullets flying overhead. At the same time, the Air Corps' transports, C-47's, came in to drop the paratroops. They flew at low altitude right in the midst of a bombing attack, over the transport roadstead, through the friendly ground and naval forces' ak-ak fire. The Air Corps' mission notification never reached the Dime forces. There were 144 planes in the mission, and 23 C-47's never returned. The ones that did were badly shot-up. Sixty pilots and crew members, along with their passengers, were lost. The next morning some survivors were picked up.

One participant in the invasion wrote, "The manipulation of fire from six ships, four organic field artillery battalions, and three infantry companies was a site never to be forgotten, a memorable battle.

By 1200 D+2, the Dime assault phase was completed as the fighting troops proceeded inland. The naval forces were rearranged; several transports, cargo ships, seven destroyers, and various other vessels set sail for Algiers.

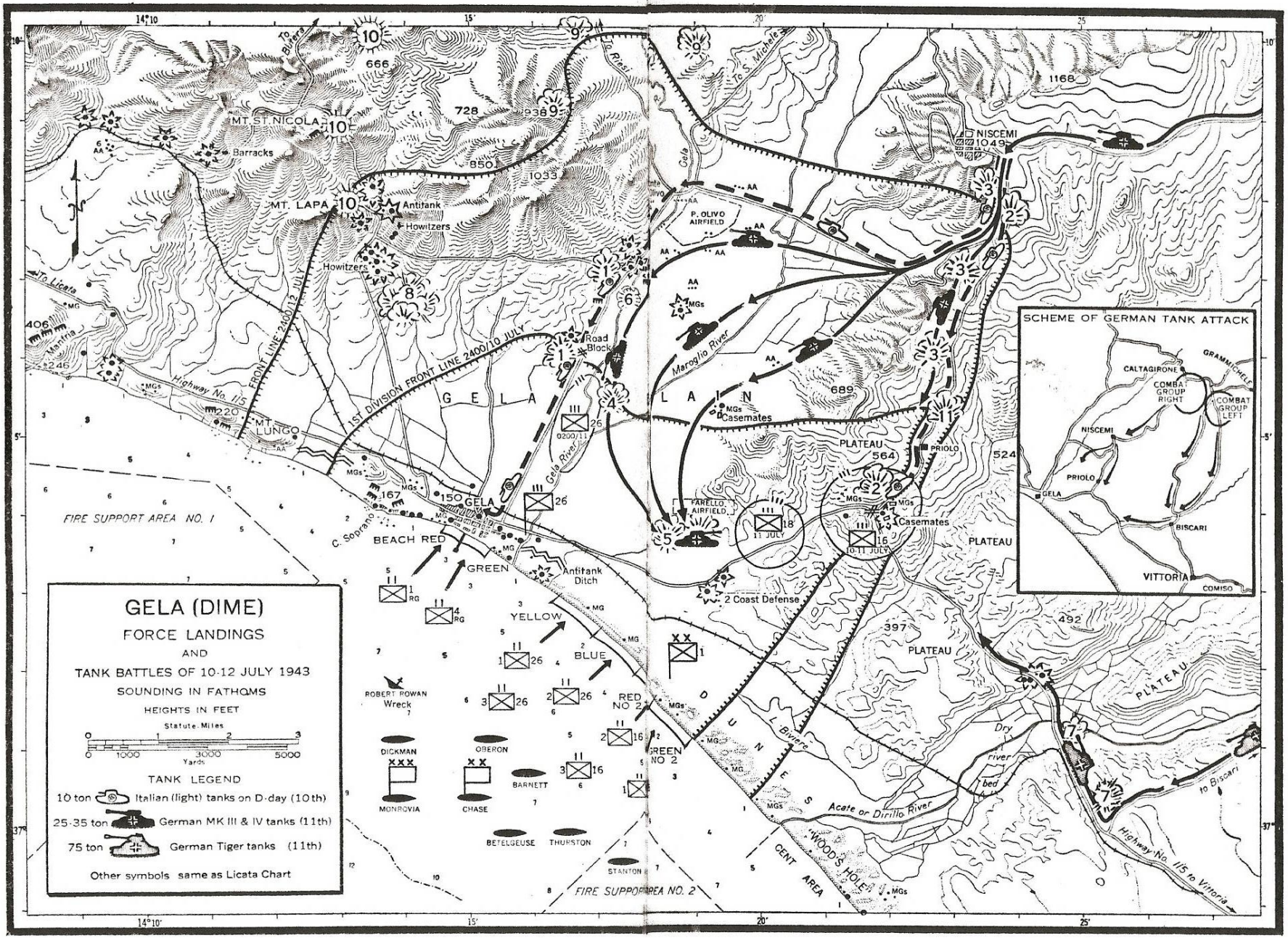
"Cent" Beaches:

The Cent Forces landed five miles east of Dime's right flank. The fishing village Scoglitti lay between the two assault groups. The beaches here were outlined with rock jetties, making it difficult to find them in the pitch darkness—very troublesome for the small LCVP's and LCT's landing with high surf and strong currents, severe surf waves breaking over the false beaches that faced the westerly winds. This exploit caused boats to ground and broach. Coxswains sighting the rocks and boats in the darkness would sheer off, causing collisions. The Plains shoreline had no definite landmarks to guide them to the beach. All of this caused a traffic jam, with boats late in landing ashore. Many soldiers lost their lives in the heavy surf and strong currents. These casualties were almost as bad as the "Torch" landings at Morocco.

The assault group 45th Division, 179th and 180th R.C.T. Battalions landed on beaches Red, Green, and Yellow. On their right flank, seven miles east, assault unit 157th R.C.T. landed on Green 2 and Yellow 2. Scoglitti village lay between them. As it turned out, these beaches were ill-chosen, soft sand beaches backed up by wide strips of soft sand dunes with few exits, plains wasteland, and two-and-a-half miles to the main coastal highway south of their objective.

The planners considered Cent to be the most important of the three assault landing areas. The committed 6,600 more troops to Cent Forces.

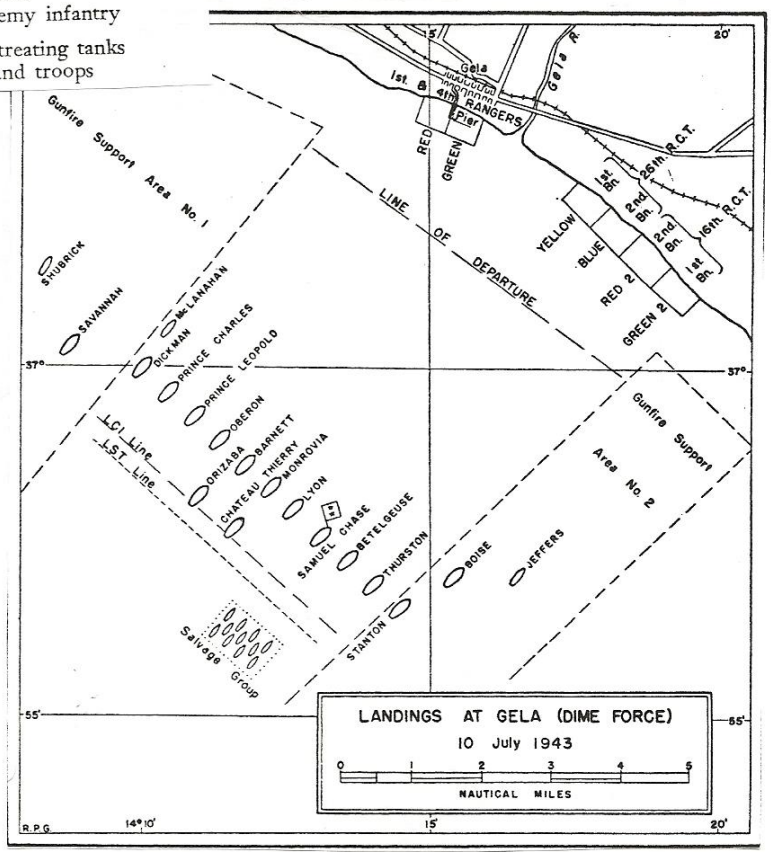
At 2230 hours, 9 July, the 82nd Airborne Division airdrops of 3,400


GELA (DIME)
FORCE LANDINGS
AND
TANK BATTLES OF 10-12 JULY 1943
SOUNDING IN FATHOMS
HEIGHTS IN FEET
Statute Miles
Yards
TANK LEGEND
10 ton Italian (light) tanks on D-day (10th)
25-35 ton German MK III & IV tanks (11th)
75 ton German Tiger tanks (11th)
Other symbols same as Licata Chart
SCHEME OF GERMAN TANK ATTACK
MT. ST NICOLA
MT. LAPA
MT. LUNGO
Barracks
Antitank
Howitzers
Road Block
Highway No. 115
1ST DIVISION FRONT LINE 2400/10 JULY
FRONT LINE 2400/12 JULY
GELA
Gela River
Maroglio River
P. OLIVO AIRFIELD
NISCEMI
1049
1168
689
PLATEAU
564
524
397
492
Casemates
PRIOLO
FARELLO AIRFIELD
11 JULY
10-11 JULY
2 Coast Defense
Antitank Ditch
BEACH RED
GREEN
YELLOW
BLUE
RED NO 2
GREEN NO 2
DUNES
C. Soprano
L. Biviere
Acate or Dirillo River
Dry river bed
to Biscari
Highway No. 115 to Vittoria
WOOD'S HOLE
CENT AREA
FIRE SUPPORT AREA NO. 1
FIRE SUPPORT AREA NO. 2
ROBERT ROWAN
Wreck
DICKMAN
OBERON
MONROVIA
CHASE
BARNETT
BETELGEUSE
THURSTON
STANTON
CALTAGIRONE
GRAMMICHELE
COMBAT GROUP RIGHT
COMBAT GROUP LEFT
VITTORIA
COMISO
BISCARI
To Butera
To Riesi
To S. Michele
To Licata
Manfria
406
246
220
167
150
728
938
850
1033
666

The Gela Landings (DIME *Force*)

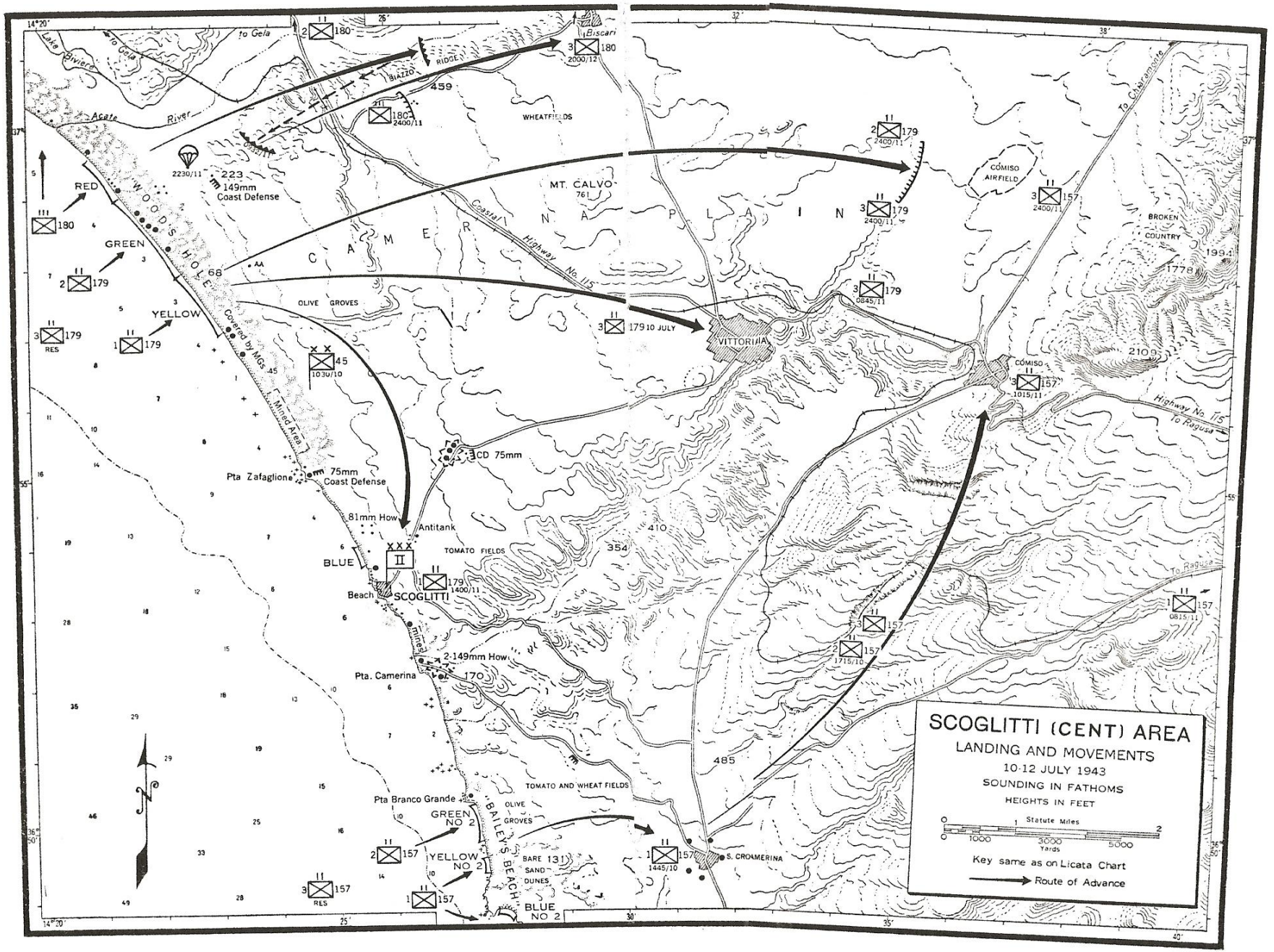
KEY TO NAVAL GUNFIRE SUPPORT ON GELA CHART, JULY 1943

No. in Chart	*Ship*	*Time*	*Rounds*	*Target*
		10 July		
1	SAVANNAH	0806–0915	126	Italian tanks
	SHUBRICK	0830–0920	100	
2	JEFFERS	0842–1512	184	Italian tanks
	BOISE	0910–1255	162	
		11 July		
3	GLENNON	0847–0957	193	German tanks
		2025–2057	165	
	BOISE	1102–1611	48	
4	SAVANNAH	0829–0843	24	German tanks
		0902–0909	15	
5	BOISE	1040–1130	38	German tanks
6	BUTLER	1316–1324	48	
7	BEATTY	0738–1047	799	German tanks
	LAUB	1100–1225	408	close support of troops
		1547–1711	343	
	COWIE	1112–1521	200	
	TILLMAN	1813–1855	46	
8	SAVANNAH	0917–1231	474	Italian infantry
		1621–1928	393	
		12 July		
9	BOISE	0719–0732	5	Retreating tanks and troops
		1635–2048	96	
10	SAVANNAH	0740–1246	519	Enemy infantry
		1445–1456	21	Butera
		1659–1721	60	Enemy infantry
11	BOISE	0913–0957	107	Retreating tanks and troops



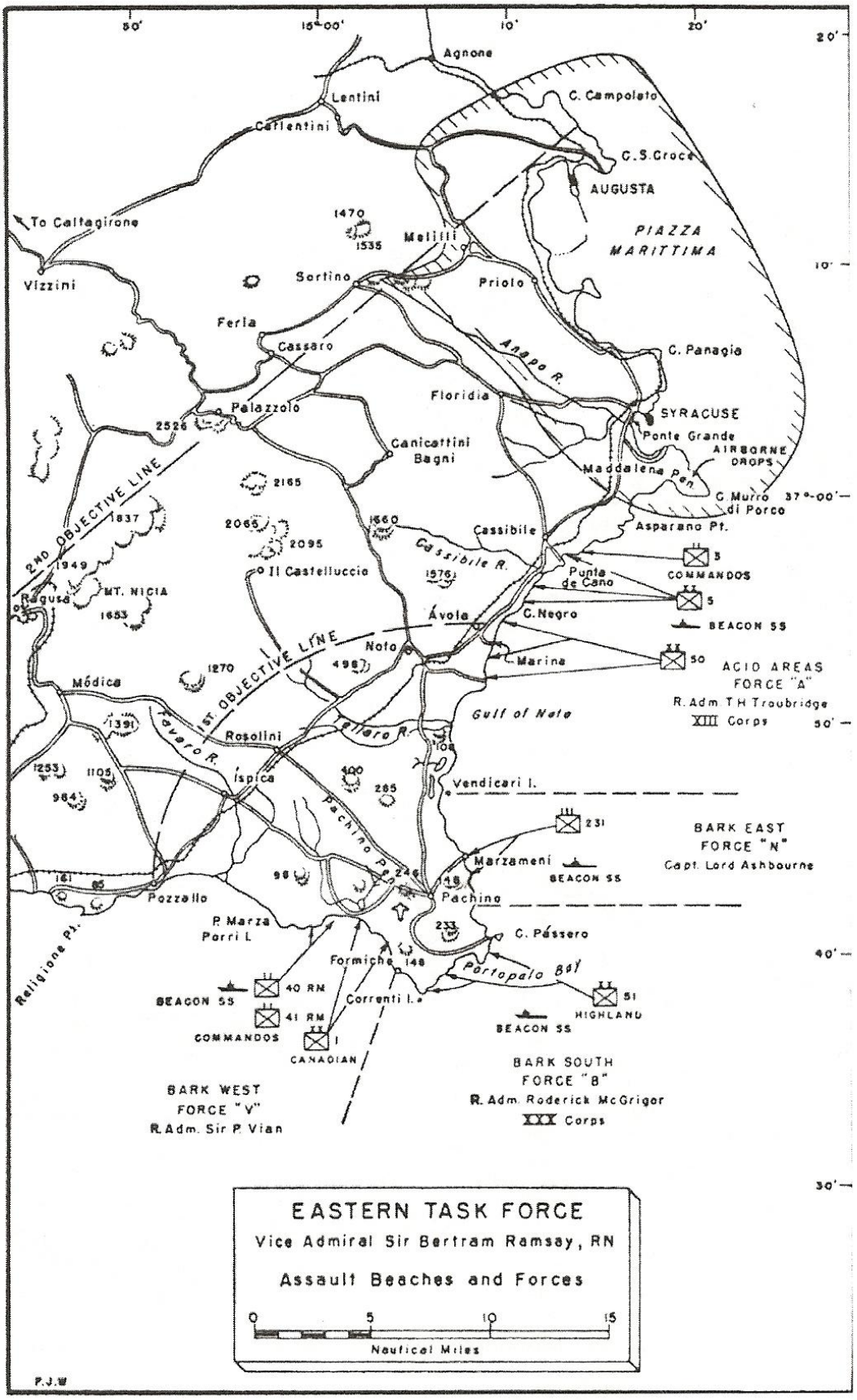
The Liberty Ship U.S.S. *Rowan* explodes after being hit by a bomb from a German JU-88. (U.S. Army photograph)

American tanks on the beach at Sicily. (U.S. Army photograph)


SCOGLITTI (CENT) AREA
LANDING AND MOVEMENTS
10-12 JULY 1943
SOUNDING IN FATHOMS
HEIGHTS IN FEET
Statute Miles
Yards
Key same as on Licata Chart
Route of Advance
to Gela
Lake Riviera
Acate River
RIDGE
BIAZZO
Biscari
WHEATFIELDS
459
223
149mm Coast Defense
MT. CALVO
761
CAMERINA PLAIN
Coastal Highway No. 115
WOODS HOLE
Covered by MGs
Mined Area
OLIVE GROVES
VITTORIA
CÓMISO AIRFIELD
CÓMISO
BROKEN COUNTRY
1778
199
2109
Highway No. 115 To Ragusa
To Chiaramonte
RED
GREEN
YELLOW
RES
10 JULY
Pta Zafaglione
75mm Coast Defense
81mm How
Antitank
TOMATO FIELDS
410
354
BLUE
Beach
SCOGLITTI
Mines
2-149mm How
Pta. Camerina
170
485
TOMATO AND WHEAT FIELDS
Pta Branco Grande
GREEN NO 2
YELLOW NO 2
BAILEY'S BEACH
BARE SAND DUNES
131
BLUE NO 2
S. CROAMERINA
14°20'
25'
26'
32'
38'
37°
36°50'
55'
40'
30'
35'

American troops and equipment unloading at Sicily. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

The U.S.S. *Boise* fires on enemy tanks from off the shore of Sicily at Gela, 11 July 1943. An LST is visible in the foreground. (U.S. Navy photograph)


Agnone
Lentini
Catlentini
C. Campolato
C.S.Croce
AUGUSTA
PIAZZA MARITTIMA
To Caltagirone
1470
1535
Melilli
Vizzini
Sortino
Priolo
Ferla
Cassaro
Anapo R.
C. Panagia
Floridia
Palazzolo
2526
SYRACUSE
Ponte Grande
AIRBORNE DROPS
Canicattini Bagni
Maddalena Pen.
C. Murro di Porco
37°-00'
2165
2066
2095
1660
Cassibile
Asparano Pt.
2ND OBJECTIVE LINE
1837
1949
Il Castelluccio
Cassibile R.
1576
Punta de Cano
3 COMMANDOS
Ragusa
MT. NICIA
1683
5
Avola
C. Negro
BEACON 55
Noto
498
C. Marina
50
ACID AREAS
FORCE "A"
R. Adm T.H. Troubridge
XIII Corps
1ST. OBJECTIVE LINE
1270
Módica
Gulf of Noto
1391
Tellaro R.
Rosolini
Tavaro R.
1253
1105
Ispica
400
265
Vendicari I.
964
Pachino Pen.
231
BARK EAST
FORCE "N"
Capt. Lord Ashbourne
Marzameni
BEACON 55
161
85
98
246
148
Pozzallo
Pachino
P. Marza
Porri L.
233
C. Passero
Religione Pt.
Formiche
148
Portopalo Bay
40 RM
BEACON 55
41 RM
COMMANDOS
Correnti I.
1 CANADIAN
51 HIGHLAND
BEACON 55
BARK WEST
FORCE "V"
R.Adm. Sir P. Vian
BARK SOUTH
FORCE "B"
R. Adm. Roderick McGrigor
XXX Corps
EASTERN TASK FORCE
Vice Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, RN
Assault Beaches and Forces
0
5
10
15
Nautical Miles
P.J.W

paratroops were dispersed along the 60 mile coast, including a portion dropped inland behind Cent Red, Green, and Yellow beaches. They were welcomed with gunfire; we could see and feel the firing, telling us our surprise attack was discovered. The enemy was partially, but not completely, surprised, but unready for our assault landings.

The 1st Battalion, 180th R.C.T. landed on Red beach, and had the worst time of all. The scouts were unable to identify the beach in time; inexperienced coxswains set them ashore miles north on one of Gela's easterly beaches, and the rest of the waves were scattered along on unscheduled beaches. All of the boat waves had excitement during their setting ashore, under an air attack by a squadron of dive-bombers and high-level bombers lit by brilliant slow-descending German yellow flares. The destroyer *Tillman* had her SG radar knocked out from several bombs landing near her, and the cruiser *Philadelphia* had some near misses as close as 35 yards, but during the 45 minutes of air attacks on the beaches and throughout the transport roadstead area, none of them were hit.

The 157th R.C.T. Barley's Beach group had a rough time on beaches Green 2 and Yellow 2. Seas were rougher here than the Wood's Hole group, referred to as the 179th and 180th assault units. The boats from the transports *Carroll* and *Anthony* were so tardy that the destroyer began shooting before they arrived after H-0400. The *Jefferson* group was last to arrive due to her rolling badly; the troops disembarked down the nets into the rolling boats, fighting wind and waves with great difficulty to stay along side the ship. Seasick soldiers had great troubles getting down the nets into the boats under such conditions. H-hour was postponed until 0345. The net loading was so slow that only three out of four assault waves were ready to sail for their beaches. Destroyers *Mervine* and *Dorn* protected the left flank for Green 2's beaches, firing on prearranged targets while the assault waves swarmed into the wrong beach head, Yellow 2.

The combination of heavy sea surf, lack of landmarks, delayed H-hour, and boat casualties set off real complications. As D-Day's sun rose over the mountains, neither Admiral Kirk nor General Middleton had a good picture of what was happening on the beaches. Cent Force was in a tight situation not of its choosing, with transports still sending troops and supplies ashore. The Italian short-range batteries, previously silent, now opened fire on the transports, forcing them to move seaward until the *Philadelphia* and other naval fire support could silence them. Along with the soft sand immobilizing the Army's heavy equipment, Yellow 2's three false beaches grounded the boats on their approach, causing backups for all trying to get ashore.

Captain Loomis arrived on the beach and immediately directed the transports

to send their LCM crafts equipped with salvage gear, to drag the stranded boats back into the water.

The Cent Force's morning landings endured numerous enemy air attacks. One sank the *Robert Rown*, but several Axis bombers were shot down.

By noon, Admiral Kirk decided to abandon the use of Yellow 2 beaches, moving the small landing craft over to the Blue's small beaches and into Scoglitti harbor cove.

A survey the next day, D+1 (11 July) of the small landing craft, LCVP's and LCM's available to the seven transports being unloaded, revealed an alarming loss: Only 66 of 175 still available, the rest damaged, burned out engines, sunk, or missing. Admiral Hewitt ordered 20 LCM's from Dime Force to help the Cent Force.

Pandemonium! Enemy air attacks at 2215! They dropped their slow-burning flares to illuminate attacks by several low-flying dive-bombers along with several high bomber attacks. Everybody let go with weapons fire on the raiders, and many men were injured by the flack from the ships. Right on the heels of these enemy attacks came the paratroops transport planes, mentioned in the Dime report, and many friendly transport planes were shot down, splashing into the sea. At daybreak several survivors were picked up.

The Army Air Corps at no time informed the Army or Navy of the paratroopers exercise in a reasonable amount of time; apparently it was a separate operation of the Air Corps, unconcerned about the situation at the Cent Force and preferring to fight its own war. This junior service would gladly have been admitted to act as a partner to the invasion forces.

The 45th Division wiggled out of its difficulties and lost remarkably little time in moving out after its targets, gathering what men it could from elements scattered along the range of beaches. The 157th, 179th, and 180th regiments had no easy going.

The 157th moved on the small village of Santa Croce Camerina, about four miles inland, preceded by accurate naval gunfire that silenced enemy guns. 500 Italian troops surrendered to them. Pushing along the edge of Camerina Plain, the 157th entered the town of Comiso in the morning, along with the Canadian 1st Division, which had landed on the Pachino Peninsula. The Italians surrendered, but the Germans had already retreated.

By 1400 the 179th had captured Scoglitti. They moved up the hard road to the town of Vettoria, about seven miles, and by the end of the day it too was captured. In the meantime the 2nd Battalion seized the important bridge over the Acate River and took the high ground dominating that valley from the west.

The 180th had no easy going, either. Colonel Schaefer, injured in the leg, led his battalion, pushing up to the town of Biscari. Just three miles short of that target they encountered a Goering combat group, consisting of a company of "Tiger" Mark VI 75 ton tanks with two infantry battalions well-equipped with artillery, mortars, and automatic weapons. Schaefer's unit, without artillery, retreated to higher ground south of 115 Highway. They managed to surround the German commander, capturing him and some of his aids.

The next day, D+1, 11 July, the 180th and 179th battalions had to abandon their positions when the German combat group stormed across the highway bridge with their tanks, driving them off the Biazzo ridge, taking their C.P. (Command Post) and pushing them back to within two miles of Wood's Hole beaches.

By 1600 a combined effort of the infantry, paratroopers, a battery of 155mm artillery, a company of Sherman tanks, and the Navy's gunfire, managed to push the Germans back. The Navy had been assisting them with four destroyers from 0730 until 1855 hours.

<u>British Sector:</u>

The Eastern Naval Task Force was commanded by Vice Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, R.N. He had a larger naval force at his disposal than the American Task force, and a military force landing ashore, the 8th Army under General Montgomery. This Eastern Task Force landing was coordinated to coincide with the American's Western Naval Task Force operation.

The British planning for "Husky" had encountered some of the same difficulties as the Americans did. Admiral Troubridge, R.N., said that if planning for Torch was horrible, planning for Husky was "hellish." Due to a lack of air protection against Axis planes and submarines, the first embarking troops, vehicles, and tons of supplies came by transport ships from the United Kingdom via the Suez Canal, sailing around Africa's Cape of Good Hope.

Due to limited resources, I can provide only a brief summary of the British actions, as follows:

The British landing points were sheltered from the westerly winds on D-Day, except Bark West-Force "V" who encountered strong winds and heavy surf like the American Cent Forces on their left flank. They suffered more from the German Luftwaffe air attacks, but they didn't encounter as strong initial opposition as the Americans had.

The 1,600 British airborne troops also performed air landings in gliders, towed by 134 airplanes of which 106 were C-47's from the U.S. Army Air Corps. They were widely scattered, and 47 came down in the sea, but the rest landed within

a reasonable distance of their targets.

General Montgomery's 8th Army landed on four beachheads, starting about 17 miles east of the American Cent Force's right flank, around Sicily's Pachino Peninsula to Cape Murro di Porco, south of Syracuse *(see Eastern Task Forces map for a more clear picture of that area)*. These forces are: Bark West-Force "V," Bark South-Force "B," Bark East-Force "N," and Acid Area-Force "A."

A close coordination was maintained between the upper level American and British commands, along with both navies. The American troops met stronger opposition landing ashore, but after 15 July it was the other way around. Each force learned valuable lessons for future assault landings.

Bark West Group:

The "V" Force under Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian, R.N., aboard H.M.S. *Hilary*, landed ashore the 40th and 41st Royal Marine Commandos and the 1st Canadian Division on the west side of Pachino Peninsula. The landing forces were commanded by Major General Simonds, and had sailed from the United Kingdom.

Their beaches were rough, like the American Cent Force beaches, with strong westerly winds and heavy surf waves with strong undercurrents. Their landing crafts had trouble grounding on the false beaches, and the ones that became stuck were unloaded by DUKWS.

They captured the village of Pozzallo on the coastal railroad and the important highway junction several miles west of the beach. They encountered heavy opposition and required naval gunfire support from the destroyers. By noon the next day, D+1, the town of Modica surrendered under the commanding general of the 206th Italian Army's Coastal Division, and the "V" Force went on to capture the important town of Regusa. The Canadian 1st Division pushed on and joined the Americans at the town of Comiso.

Bark South Group:

The "B" Force under Rear Admiral McGrigor, R.N., aboard H.M.S. *Largs*, landed the 154th Brigade and 51st Highland Division on beaches at the end of the Pachino Peninsula under the command of Major General Wimbealy. The "B" Force had sailed from ports in North Africa.

Their storm-tossed approach forced them to alter course to the north, landing in the lee on these small beaches between Correnti Island and the west end of Portopalo Bay. The 51st Highlanders promptly captured the Italian defenders, so the sand beaches were ready for the LCT's to land ashore. By sunrise they had all the tanks and anti-tank guns ashore, and the LST's were landing by mid-afternoon.

They took the little town of Pachino at 0700, and later met the Canadians at the Pachino airfield. The field had been badly cratered by the Royal Navy's 15-inch guns. The British construction group had the landing strip ready for emergency landings that afternoon. On the 14th, D+2, a fighter squadron began to base there. By dark the 51st Division was ashore, minus kilts, but complete with bagpipes and vehicles. The Pachino Peninsula is flat and almost treeless, good ground for troop deployment.

Bark East Group:

The "N" Force was concentrated about five miles north of the "B" Force. Captain Lord Ashbourne, R.N., was in command aboard H.M.S. *Keren*. They landed ashore the 231st (Malta) Infantry Brigade, a small force commanded by Brigadier Urguhart from the Middle East, on the east side of the Pachino Peninsula. On 6 July the freighter S.S. *Shahjehan* was torpedoed by submarine U-453 in convoy to Sicily; she carried vehicles and supplies along with four companies of stevedores, and the loss was severely felt.

"N" Force beaches were just south of Mazzameni, a small fishing village protected by two small islands, but the islands offered no protection for the transports. The north wind off Mt. Etna kicked up heavy seas, making for a difficult, slow process of lowering and loading the small landing crafts. However, they were able to land ashore as scheduled, H-hour, making a ragged run for the beach. Here, the surprise was so complete that the troops captured an Italian 75mm gun concealed in a shed behind the beach, finding the crew of the gun fast asleep.

A battery of five coastal defense guns located 200 yards off the beach, their crews awakened in time, set off a barrage on the assault force, but they failed to hit anything. Guns from the H.M.S. *Flores* and *Sobma* quickly silenced them.

At daybreak the LST's were able to beach directly ashore to discharge their vehicles and tanks. The LC T's were six hours late due to the storms and high seas. Admiral McGrigor sent some of their LCT's from Bark South to help unload the Liberty ships.

Acid Force "A":

This "A" Force area in the Gulf of Noto, the most powerful of the British assaults, was commanded by Rear Admiral Troubridge, R.N., aboard H.M.S. *Bucoco*. He deployed the XIII Corps, 5th and 50th Divisions, from Alexandria and Port Said, Egypt, in several separate convoys. Admiral Ramsay, R.N., sailed from the Island of Malta in H.M.S. *Antwerp* 9 July to witness the rendezvous of these widely spaced convoys in such heavy weather conditions. It came off successfully.

Acid Force landed ashore on ten beaches strung out ten miles along the Gulf of Noto beaches. They also had trouble lowering and loading their small landing craft, battling the strong winds and heavy seas. The beaches were sheltered from the wind, giving them smooth landings. At first light the Italians' coastal guns at the fishing village Avola opened fire on Acid's southern assault beaches, until the guns on H.M.S. *Eskimo* relieved the situation. As the 50th Division moved on Avola, they were attacked by strafing ME-109's. By mid-morning all of their troops had landed and captured all coastal defenses with light opposition. On the high, arid plateau above Avola was the town of Nota, which they captured the next morning.

The Acid group north, 3rd Commandos, had an excellent landing place, a crescent-shaped sand beach with a solid road through an almond grove to the town of Cassibile on the main highway. It was in British hands by 0800. The region was highly cultivated with olive and almond groves, and small fields separated by stone walls. Roads were numerous, and the British had good exits from the beach. By evening, D-Day, the 5th Division was established on the Montago d'Avola plateau.

The large transport ships moved out from their close-in beach anchor area by 1530 D-Day, avoiding the biggest air attack at sundown. That evening the enemy planes attacked the hospital ships *Dorsethire* and *Talamba*, which were fully illuminated three miles outside the transports roadstead anchorage. Both were hit, and *Talamba* sank after all patients had been taken off.

The night moon waxed brighter and set later; every night was bright. The Axis air bombers took advantage of these nights, with their airfields only 40 miles away in southern Italy. The British encountered more air attacks than the Americans, continuing long after 13 July. Like the Americans, the British beaches were congested, with ships arriving, unloading, and departing. Smoke screens were used extensively, but not every ship escaped. Besides *Eskimo* and *Talamba*, four Liberty ships and a Dutch Auxiliary, N.M.S. *Baarn* were hit. The Liberty ship *Joseph G. Cannon* was hit after unloading ammunition, but her sister ship *Timothy Pickering* wasn't so lucky; while unloading explosives she took a direct hit that split her in two. The Liberty ships *William T. Coleman*, H.M.S. *Queen Emma* and *Samuel Parker* also suffered hits with men killed and wounded.

Despite those losses, Admiral Ramsay was pleased with his good tactical air support furnished from the islands of Malta and Gozo. Admiral Hewitts, however, was displeased with what air support he obtained. The Eastern Forces lost more ships to air attacks than the Western Forces. Admiral Cunningham said, "That great fleets of ships could remain anchored on the enemy's coast within reach of his airdromes, with such slight losses from air attacks as were endured, it appeared almost magical."

It's interesting to note that the British airborne troops second mission, the night of 13-14 July, met with the same devastation as did the American paratroops, on such short notice that ships did not receive word of their mission. They, too, arrived at the same time as the enemy bombing attacks, and several friendly planes were shot town.

About D+1730 (D-Day), Flotilla Four departed from the transport area with 20 of our vessels, returning to Bizerte to bring in more troops. We sailed unescorted by naval ships, leaving the Gala Gulf waters under the cover of darkness.

Into our return trip the next morning, I was on watch again, sighting one of our bombers, a B-24 "Liberator," at 0915, 11 July, flying low over the water. I reported it to the O.D. on the fly bridge. They also had spotted the bomber limping home. As we watched the bomber being escorted by a fighter plane, a Spitfire with American markings, it finally ditched into the water several miles from us. The fighter plane came over to our convoy, circled around us, and flew back to the ditched bomber. It kept circling around us and the ditched bomber.

The Captain and Commander Unger came to the bridge and directed us to depart from the convoy to rescue the downed airmen. We changed course to our port on the bearing I logged. As we left the convoy the fighter plane swooped down over us with a burst of fire from his guns, dipping his wings, banking around and then flying off to the south. We were just off the coast of Tunisia's Cape Bon.

Approaching the area where the bomber ditched, we found the airmen with their yellow rubber rafts. They were waiving their hands; boy, were they happy to see us! The water was very choppy, a fresh breeze with two-and-a-half to three foot waves. This condition made it hard to maneuver the flat bottomed ship near enough for us to get a line to the airmen. I said to the Captain, "Let me swim out to get them." He gave me the OK to do it.

Getting down on the main deck, kicking off my shoes and getting out of my coveralls, I directed Karner, as I tied a heaving line around my waist, to keep tying heaving lines to my line as I swam out to the rafts, and told him I'd signal him when to pull us in. As I got to the first raft, one of the airmen, injured, lay in the raft. His legs had the flesh torn up from the shrapnel, bleeding with the flesh floating with the movement of the water in the raft. It made me sick, but I got control of myself, pulling that raft as I swam over to the other raft. There was another airman badly injured in this raft. I got hold of it, lying on my back, holding the two rafts, signaling Karner to pull us in.

When I got to the ship the crew had the rope ladder over the side. Doc had the litter ready to pick up the injured men. The five airmen not injured scrambled up the

ladder. Karner jumped into the water to help me get the injured airmen in the litter. Doc treated the injured men. The crew got the other airmen out of their wet clothing and into dry clothing they settled down with hot coffee and something to eat.

We finally caught up to the other LCI's as they were entering Port Bizerte. 1330, we tied up at the dock. The air force ambulance was waiting and they took the airmen up to the base hospital. Our good deed for the day had been completed.

The troops were loaded, a hospital group and their equipment, and at 1700, we departed from Port Bizerte bound for Port Licata, Sicily. It was smooth sailing through the night this time. At 0930, 12 July, we arrived at Port Licata and unloaded the troops and their cargo.

I had the crew cleaning up after the hospital group left. Herring and I were in the bulwarks when the enemy air raid came--six ME 109 Messerschmitts, dive bombing and strafing, attacked the harbor. We scrambled up to the bow 20 MM gun. I got hold of the gun, pulled it down and swung it around when the last plane flew right over us. I had a straight away, one o'clock shot at the ME 109. As I started shooting at the plane, the pilot turned his head to the left to see where his bombs were falling. My gun blazing away, I saw the bullets hitting the bottom of the planes fuselage and a sudden burst of flames. The plane crashed into the water. Herring, a very excitable guy, shouted "You got him! You got him!" We were the only gun firing at the plane. Fortunately, the bombs landed on the other side of the warehouse. The ME 109 pilot was killed when the plane crashed into the harbor bay. At the time I was proud of myself for shooting down an enemy plane. You know, to this day I can see that pilot turning his head looking back as he flew over us. Interesting how some of these moments stay with you.

After lunch, about 1300, we boarded Italian soldier prisoners to be transported back to Bizerte. As we departed Port Licata, the Italian soldiers wanted life preservers. They were afraid that the Germans would try to sink our ship. They were sure that their U-boats would get us. They were really worried. We told them we were in control now and that they should not be concerned. About 1500, 13 July, we arrived back at Port Bizerte and the prisoners disembarked.

The next day, we were cleaning up the troop compartments and the guys started to complain about getting bitten. Come to find out, we had sand fleas the Italian soldiers had left behind. We had a mess to deal with the fleas. I had all the bunks removed and dipped overboard, then scrubbed. The compartments were thoroughly scrubbed and disinfected. It took us several days to get the fleas cleaned out.

During the next six weeks we had maneuvers with the replacement troops

"**EYES TO THE SKIES** and faces tense, U.S. Coast Guardsmen (above) ward off enemy planes while aboard an LCI. L. to R. are Wayne F. Leidy, Philadelphia, William D. Elder, Jersey Shore, Pa., and Robert Herring, Newy York City." (U.S. Coast Guard press release)

An LST lands men and supplies at a beach on the Gulf of Gela. (U.S. Navy photograph)

A Coast Guardsman and a soldier look over a Spitfire in U.S. markings that crashed on the beach near Salerno. (U.S. Navy photograph)

arriving, so we spent most of our time at Oran, Algeria beaches doing landings. On 6 September, we boarded troop replacements and took them to Palermo, Sicily. On 7 September, we made Port Palermo and disembarked the troops.

The Husky Invasion brought the Army and Navy together to act as a single fighting group. General Middleton, who had sailed on the flagship *Ancon* admired the perseverance of Admiral Kirk's sailors in landing his division ashore with its equipment; though it was not done exactly to-plan, he knew why. The "snafus" were typical of any large amphibious invasions. The fleet admiral, Admiral Cunningham, who visited the "Cent" area on D-Day, reported to General Eisenhower that Admiral Kirk's ashore landings "constituted one of the finest exhibitions of seamanship it had been his pleasure to witness in 45 years of sailoring."

The untried troops of the 45th Division had now tasted blood, and they became part of "Blood and Guts" General Patton's 7th Army as they joined able veteran units from Operation Torch, pushing inland in Sicily.

As I researched Husky's ashore landings, I realized how fortunate they were that night, successfully accomplishing landings under strong westerly winds whipping up heavy sea surf and strong undercurrents. They met unexpected situations and foul-ups, straightening things out with varying degrees of resistance. Licata, Gela, and Scoglitti were taken on D-Day, and by D+2, 12 July, the plains area, Ginisi, Gela, and Camerina—along with their airfields—were taken, pushing the Axis forces north. It was our first major invasion force. The effective naval gunfire support, hitting enemy strong gun batteries, repelling tank counter-attacks, and coordinating with the Army's ground troops, was also a first.

The Axis had 300,000 troops under arms in Sicily, including a Hermann Goering Tank Division with 100 tanks, and a German Luftwaffe air force of 1,000 serviceable planes within flying distance, when the Allied forces landed on Sicily's shores 10 July 1943. Instead of thousands of casualties along the American forces 60-mile sector front, it was a few hundred. There were over 3,000 Italian soldiers captured in this sector.

Our action in the invasion force did not end after the initial landings. In the following days, the Navy kept landing army troops and their supplies, kept an eye on the beach, mothered reinforcement convoys, and patrolled the Mediterranean Sea.

After the initial landing, Captain Imlay, USCG, skillfully assisted in support of supplies and maintenance for the Army at Port Licata. There he supervised the clearance of mines, preparing the port to handle the important equipment and

supplies in spite of the enemy bombing and strafing of the port. His leadership was brilliant with outstanding performance from his LCI's Flotilla Four; Captain Imlay was awarded the Legion of Merit.

By D+30, statistics logged at Port Licata were 60,300-plus troops, 14,600-plus vehicles, and 88,703 long tons of supplies flowing into the area for the American troops.

The U.S. Coast Guard manned attack transports, *Samuel Chase, Joseph Dickman,* and the *Leonard Wood* performed outstanding with their boats landing their troop and equipment at the three landing Forces: Cent, Dime, and Joss under the rough seas and surf conditions. Their young sailors performed marvels of valor and proved themselves to be brave and resourceful. Also in the assault were two U.S. Coast Guard-manned, 175-foot submarine chasers, PC-545 and PC-556.

The beachhead secured, the 7th Army pushed on, 18 July, taking control of the northern part of Sicily. By 22 July Palermo was captured. General Patton's patrol entered the city of Messina on 10 August. Two hours later the British 8th's tanks rumbled into Messina. Sicily was conquered.

You hear very little about the Sicilian invasion, Operation "Husky," but it merits great respect. It's hard to realize the huge amount of planning involved, a staggering task with huge staffs working out details on a million things, all done in five months. It's miraculous that they pulled off the largest frontal invasion—a 100-mile Allied front—in the history of the world.

Admiral Morrison, U.S.N., had this to say in his History of Naval Operations "Sicily": "If landings and beaching craft crews had failed, this entire American part of Operation Husky would have failed, and the British would have been left to carry the war into Sicily unsupported. They did not fail; those young sailors performed marvels and miracles of judgment. All honor them, to these lads…since they proved themselves to be strong, brave, and resourceful."

Rear Admiral Busemeire, U.S.N., said the true heroes of the western landings were the crews of the landing crafts and beaching crafts.

CHAPTER 7

OPERATION "AVALANCHE" - SALERNO, ITALY

On 8 September, under the setting sun, we departed from Port Palermo, Sicily. Later in the evening we joined the Flotilla Four group sailing from Bizerte, Tunisia. It's been awhile since the flotilla had been together. No troops! Have no idea where we are bound for. About 1400 our small convoy was spotted by an enemy recognizance plane, which promptly departed. The escort destroyer fired a few rounds at the plane.

At 1800, four FW-190s swooped down low approaching our flotilla, their guns blazing. No LCI's fired for fear of hitting each other. As they flew over us dropping their bombs, we let loose our fire power. One plane was damaged, smoking, as they headed off. Six crew members on the LC1 319 were injured by the plane's gunfire. No bombs hit the LCI's, but four narrowly missed and their explosions put four of the LCI's gyro compasses out of commission.

About 1900 we joined up with a convoy force. At 2015, six ME-109s came out of the setting sun and dived upon the attack transports, strafing and bombing them. The distant escort destroyers opened fire at them hitting one of the planes which crashed into the sea near one of the transports. One of the LST's, 624, was hit squarely by a bomb, bursting into flames. We had two attacks by FW-90's, one at 2015 and the other at 2230. No ships were hit.

That evening we were briefed on the invasion taking place in the Salerno Bay, some 40 miles southeast of Naples. The landings were to be along the rim of the Bay at the Sele River, 17 miles south of Salerno. The American Southern Attack Force would land on the south side of the river with the British Northern Attack Force landing on the north side of the river. We were to stand by the attack transports to evacuate troops if required or land reinforcements on Red Beach from the *Duchess of Bedford* Transport. "H" hour - 0330 - 9 September; at 2000 the ship would stand at General Quarters until further notice.

After the briefing, Chiefs Lauve, Lewis, Holliday, Cox and I gathered at our usual fantail, scuttlebutt talking. As it was getting dark, I went below in the aft-steering room, and got one of the bottles of wine I had hid in the bulgewater. I brought it up, and cleaned it off. The Chief popped the cork, took a pull and passed it for all of us to have a pull, enjoying the wine taste along with our conversation.

Lou said, "Elder, how do you come up with this?"

"Well, you know how it is being on the dock in search for supplies. Amazing little things just show up." That brought up a laugh.

Its hard living on board a small ship, and it was hard to keep entertained while off duty. We kept busy reading, playing cards, checkers, talking, arguing, drinking coffee and etc. We had a poker group. Lewis, Zak, Wrase, Karner, and me or anyone else willing to put up $10 to get into the game. That's life on board the LCI.

Salerno's Amphibious Approach Plan and Command:

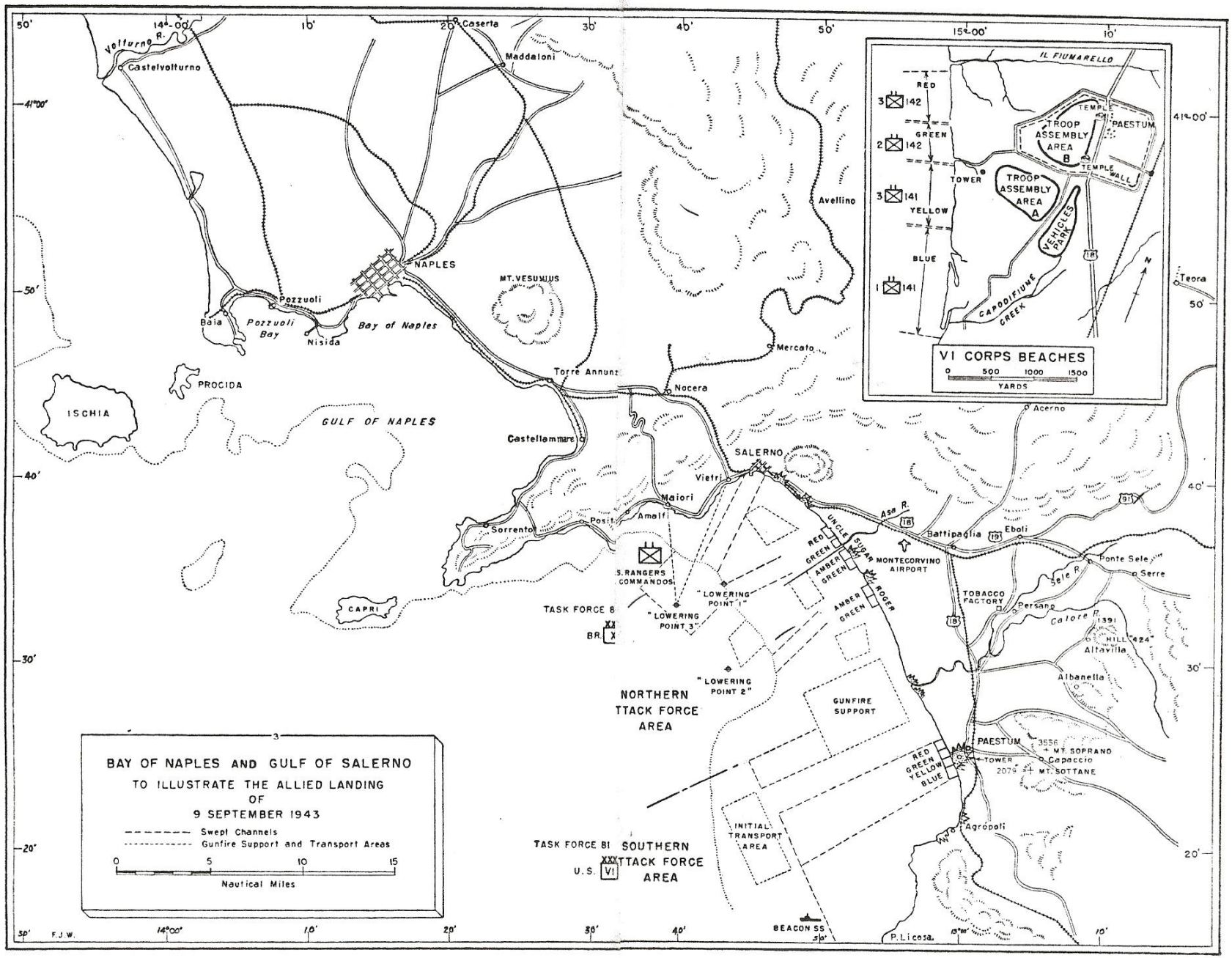
General Eisenhower, Allied Mediterranean Commander; Admiral Cunningham, RN, the Fleet Commander; Vice Admiral Hewitt, USN Western Naval Task Force Commander, including all amphibious forces and Royal Navy covering forces. Under Hewitt were Northern Attack Force (mainly British) commanded by Commodore Oliver, RN, and Southern Attack Forces (American) commanded by Rear Admiral Hall, USN.

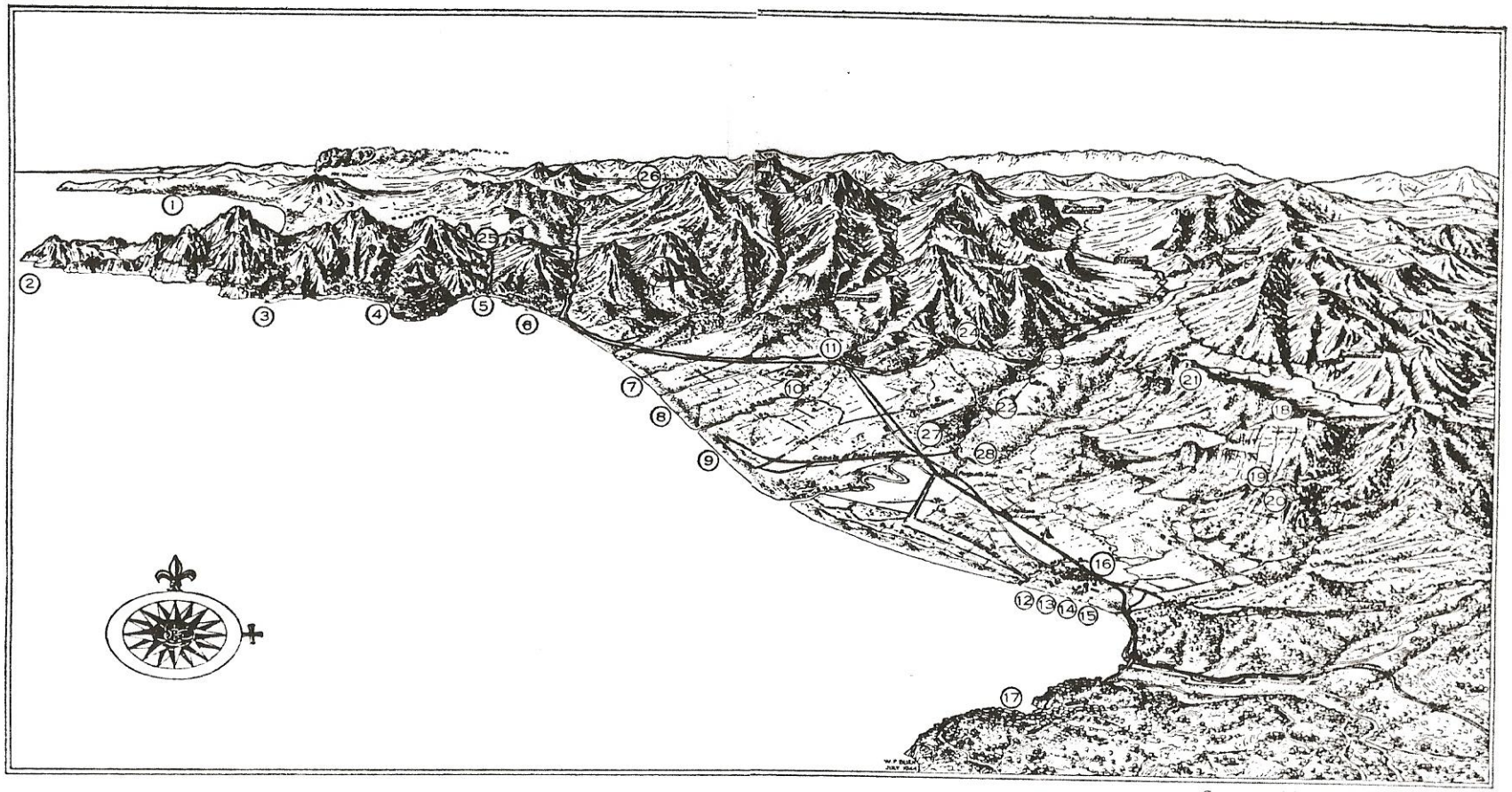
The ground forces: Lt. General Clark, USA, Fifth Army, divided into two corps—the United States VI, comprising the 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions under Major General Dawley, USA, with the 3rd and 34th in reserve, and the British X Corps, Lt. General McCreery, comprising 46th and 56th Infantry Division, and reserves.

The planning for "Avalanche" was more dispersed, hectic and exasperating than "Husky;" it started very late, with very little time to meet the target date of 9 September. Their forces were dispersed between Oran and Algiers, Algeria and Alexandria, Egypt, including ports at Sicily. The Italy landing areas considered were north of Naples, the Gulf of Naples, and the Gulf of Salerno. The first two were discarded due to poor beaches, heavily fortified areas, and too distant for air support. So the decision was the Gulf of Salerno. A late, troublesome factor was the discovery that the bay was mined. It would take extra time for the minesweepers to clear the path, and added to the intricate timetable for the assault waves from the attack transports anchored 12 miles off Salerno's beaches.

There was also a great deal of uncertainty about what forces would be available, even up to the eve of D-Day. Reliance was placed on personal briefing of commanding officers and flotilla leaders.

The logistics of the operation reached tremendous proportions, with ammunition, fuel, and troops accumulated in the Sicilian ports of Messina, Termini, and Palermo for speedy movement to Salerno by LST's and LCT's. They hoped to use the port of Salerno for the follow up convoys of supply ships. Two follow-up


BAY OF NAPLES AND GULF OF SALERNO
TO ILLUSTRATE THE ALLIED LANDING
OF
9 SEPTEMBER 1943
Swept Channels
Gunfire Support and Transport Areas
0 5 10 15
Nautical Miles
VI CORPS BEACHES
0 500 1000 1500
YARDS
RED
GREEN
YELLOW
BLUE
TROOP ASSEMBLY AREA B
TROOP ASSEMBLY AREA A
VEHICLES PARK
TEMPLE
PAESTUM
TEMPLE WALL
TOWER
IL FIUMARELLO
CAPODIFIUME
GREEK
Volturno R.
Castelvolturno
Caserta
Maddaloni
Avellino
NAPLES
MT. VESUVIUS
Pozzuoli
Baia
Pozzuoli Bay
Nisida
Bay of Naples
Mercato
Torre Annunz
Nocera
PROCIDA
ISCHIA
GULF OF NAPLES
Castellammare
SALERNO
Vietri
Maiori
Amalfi
Positano
Sorrento
CAPRI
Acerno
Teora
Asa R.
Battipaglia
Eboli
Ponte Sele
Serre
Sele R.
TOBACCO FACTORY
Persano
Calore R.
HILL "424"
Altavilla
Albanella
MONTECORVINO AIRPORT
UNCLE
SUGAR
ROGER
S. RANGERS COMMANDOS
"LOWERING POINT 1"
"LOWERING POINT 2"
"LOWERING POINT 3"
TASK FORCE 81
BR. XX X
NORTHERN TTACK FORCE AREA
GUNFIRE SUPPORT
INITIAL TRANSPORT AREA
TASK FORCE 81 SOUTHERN
U.S. XXX VI TTACK FORCE AREA
PAESTUM
TOWER
3556
MT. SOPRANO
Capaccio
2079
MT. SOTTANE
Agropoli
BEACON SS
P. Licosa
F.J.W.



—Courtesy of Office of Chief of Military History

Panorama of the Salerno Beachhead

KEY:

1 Naples
2 Sorrento peninsula
3 Amalfi
4 Maiori
5 Vietri
6 Salerno
7 Uncle Beaches
8 Sugar Beaches
9 Roger Beaches
10 Montecorvino Airport
11 Battipaglia
12 Beach Red
13 Beach Green
14 Beach Yellow
15 Beach Blue
16 Paestum
17 Agrópoli
18 Monte Soprano
19 Capaccio
20 Monte Sottane
21 Altavilla
22 Persano
23 Ponte Sele
24 Eboli
25 Cava Gap
26 Avellino
27 Tobacco Factory
28 Fork of Sele and Calore Rivers

convoys scheduled to arrive off Salerno D+1 got there a day early and had to stand off until needed.

The air support was better organized by General Eisenhower, who insisted on cooperation among the armed forces. A fighter-director team was installed aboard the flagship and two standby director ships were provided. They coordinated fighter cover –P-38's and Spitfires– during the landings within a 50 mile arc of beachhead to box-in the assault area between the elevations of 6,000 and 20,000 feet.

The decision against having preliminary gunfire support prior to the landings to gain tactical surprise was unfortunate. Admiral Hewitt argued against that decision. He pointed out that the Germans knew something was up, as evidenced by their air raids on the concentration of ships in Lake Bizerte, and reconnaissance planes would snoop on the convoys. He was right. The Germans had already sent the 16th Panzer Division into the Salerno Plain, set up 88mm guns, built strong points on the beaches with field pieces and machine guns, and crammed nearby airfields with planes.

The nights of 6-7 September there were heavy air attacks on the concentration of anchored ships here in Lake Bizerte. These raids consisted of about 90 JU-88 heavy bombers, but no damage was reported.

As the attack forces steamed toward the Gulf of Salerno, 1830 8 September, General Eisenhower broadcast an announcement that the Italians had surrendered. The troops were relieved and relaxed from the tension that was felt before the landing; they felt they'd be greeted warmly by the Italians. The evening was beautiful, sailing over a calm sea; the sun set glowed with a golden-red over the horizon, a romantic setting with the appearance of the softly twinkling stars of early evening--a superb panorama.

As the forces approached Salerno Bay, they departed from the convoy and steamed directly to their designated release points. The U.S. cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Savannah*, with twelve destroyers, stationed themselves on the flanks for the Southern Force. Our LCI's laid around the attack transports for air raid protection until we were needed. At 0020, the four scout boats left to set up their direction lights--red, green, yellow, and blue--on the beaches. The attack transports were starting to lower their boats to load the soldiers.

The plain areas south of Salerno are fertile fields with several rivers, intensively cultivated with tobacco, olive and walnut groves, truck gardens with a few dairy farms. The small towns and villages lie at the foothills of the mountains. The roads and railroads skirt along the foothills.

The Allies beaches were well selected for a night landing, had tactical

surprise been obtained, or if the enemy had been lukewarm fighters as on the coast of Sicily, but the Germans had taken over Italy's defenses after the Italian surrender, and prepared themselves for the fight. The plain plateau offered good deployment for our troops. It was also estimated that fighter planes could give the landings air cover from their air fields on Sicily.

Unfortunately the Germans also figured the fighter planes distance, and the beach area too. They prepared to contest a landing in the area. They deployed the 16th Panzer Tank Division along with an infantry division with a mobile 75mm and 88mm gun artillery unit, built strong points with heavy machine gun pill boxes, added a squad of antiaircraft guns, and set up heavy coastal guns in the mountains. They felt they could annihilate the Allies' concentrated forces, and throw them helplessly into the sea.

The British put ashore on the north side of the Sele River to capture Salerno, Montecorvino airport, and the town of Battipaglia. The Americans landed on the south side of the Sele River to protect the British right flank and join them. The eight mile separation kept the amphibious craft off Sele River's obstructive sand estuary bars. The beaches had hard white sand good for the Army's vehicles and artillery to move quickly off the beach.

Just prior to the D-Day landing we found out that the beach waters and beaches were heavily mined. In order for the minesweepers to sweep the boat channels and fire support area before H-hour 0330, the troop transports were forced to anchor 8 to 10 miles off shore. All the LCVP's boat waves had to be rescheduled for the extra distance to the beaches to meet their time to land ashore.

Southern Attack Force

The 142nd R.C.T. went ashore on Red and Green beaches. The Army didn't want close-shore fire support to obtain surprise if they landed silently. Unfortunately the Germans were prepared. They had been expecting a landing for several days. Our scout boats were able to mark the beaches before H-hour

The initial waves of LCVP boats sailed over calm waters, hitting their respective beaches within minutes of H-0330, with the follow-up waves at their timed intervals. As the first waves hit the beaches, many soldiers were killed by the ready-and-waiting gunners as they came ashore. Heavy fire from machine guns, mortar shells, and field artillery shells descended on the landing crafts. To make matters worse, in comes the Luftwaffe dive-bombing and strafing the beach landings.

Relentless, the 142nd were able to make their way through the gunfire, barbed

wire, and mines, around lost men and through the German defenses to their assembling area by sunrise, 0436. The Germans left behind them were mopped up by later waves arriving. The DUKWS (amphibious trucks) carrying field pieces started to arrive at 0530. The battle started to get fierce, with heavy guns and both sides firing.

The Green beach group was held up due to floating mines. When they finally started to move in, they too came under heavy fire. The rocket launching boat opened fire, silencing this shore gunfire that was directed at the landing boats. Here too, the DUKWS starting hitting the beach at 0525, with 105mm Howitzers and ammunition.

The Germans raised havoc with the Allied forces at the southern part of Green beach and on Yellow and Blue beaches, with machine guns mounted in the old stone watchtowers built centuries ago to warn people of attacks by sea, and on the old stone wall. Here, behind the stone walls and farm buildings, several of the enemy's tanks lurked, holding the Allied troops to the beach area. The Navy's guns could not fire on these strong points so close to the troops. The 531st Shore Engineers, who lost several of their officers to the early air attacks, finally got into the action, moving on the enemy, killing or capturing those defenders, and knocking out all of their tanks.

These southern beaches encountered strong defense by the German-constructed strong points. They were also within range of their coastal gun batteries near Agropoli. Here, as they came ashore, the Germans had a loudspeaker that announced, in English, "Come on in and give up, we have you covered!" The 141st, 3rd Battalion's first several assault waves were covered. They were stopped by the tanks and strong points, but held their ground until the reserve battalion came in at 0500 to get them off the beach. From 0830 to 1335, Yellow beach was interdicted and Blue beach's 1st Battalion was pinned down until 1600. Their LCT's came under heavy fire about 0640; four were hit by 88mm shells, and all moved out of range to await orders to land. They finally started in around 1200, with gunfire support from the destroyers, to discharge their tanks and vehicles on Red beach.

At 0745, six ME-109's came over the mountains, out of the sun, and bombed and strafed the transport road. There was no great damage from the attacks. It was over in minutes. I fired off a 20mm magazine round, and getting into the fight made me feel a little better.

A tank laden group on LST 289 was able to beach at Blue beach at 1241. Here crew bravely rigged the pontoon bridge under this enemy fire, discharging the

tank at 1350. At the same time, the southern part of Blue beach was forced to close its beach. After several hours it was reopened with fire support from the destroyers. It finally became the principle beach for discharging the Army's heavy vehicles and tanks.

The 36th Division, on Blue beach, had very little artillery ashore to combat the active Mark IV German tanks in the open and behind the old Greek City wall, and facing the tanks and the machine guns mounted on the wall they could not advance. The dismounted Cavalry reconnaissance troops helped them with their bazookas, 105mm Howitzer, and destroyer gunfire, preventing the Mark IV's from advancing to the beach shores. By noon the Germans were forced to retreat, but some of their fire still pounded Red and Green beaches.

At 1020, 13 tanks came down the north highway, advancing on the 142nd R.C.T.'s C.P. (Command Post), which had just put up in the Capaccio railroad station just north of Paestum. The 105mm Howitzer that was just set up knocked out two of the tanks, and another was shattered by gunfire by one of our A-36 Invader dive-bombers. The gun shells from HMS *Abercrombie* accounted for two more tanks, forcing them to retreat.

On shore, the beaches looked secured, but a German counter-attack with tanks and infantry kept our troops from advancing. The cruisers and some of the destroyers were bombarding those German guns inland, and as the congestion on the beach started to clear the boats carrying the armor and vehicles started to land on the beaches, strengthening our troops.

Navy shells whizzed overhead, and enemy shells were splashing into the surrounding waters. The torpedo boats were laying smoke screens to shield their transports and beach landings. All of this gave me a nervous, sweaty feeling, and I hoped we would not be on the receiving end of one of those incoming shells.

At D-1430, we came alongside the HMS *Duchess of Bedford*, a British troop transport, and picked up the reserve troop reinforcement, the Fifth Army's 143rd R.C.T. They were destined to land on Red and Green beaches at 0630. The delayed landing was due to the fierce enemy fighting, holding the earlier troops from advancing off of the congested beaches. At 1515 we landed, disembarking our troops. We returned to the *Duchess of Bedford* for more troops. After those troops disembarked, Captain Fabian sent me to check the abandoned LCVP boat on the beach. I checked it over and reported that the boat looked seaworthy. "It's one of *Charles Carroll's* boats," I told the Captain.

"Let's salvage it," he replied. "Get Chief Lauve and a couple of men to get it

rigged so we can pull it off the beach."

We got it rigged to be pulled off. The Captain backed the 89 off the beach, and LCVP slid off easily and floated. I jumped into the boat and found it to be sound, with no leaks. Chief Lauve and Copland checked out the motor, which needed to be repaired.

Captain Fabian said, "We'll return it to the *Carroll.* Rig it for towing."

As we were leaving the beach area, darkness was setting in, and in came FW-109's attacking the transport group. Fortunately we were out of harm's way. We waited until daylight to return the *Carroll's* boat.

Rear Admiral Davidson, flag aboard the cruiser *Philadelphia,* commanded the naval gunfire support in the American sector. He had at his disposal the cruiser *Savannah* and four destroyers, *Edison, Bristol, Ludlow,* and *Woolsey,* with the HMS *Abercrombie* and a Dutch gunboat to screen her. She was the first to fire her 15 inch guns, expending 11 rounds between D-0825 and 1030 on a German gun battery with her aircraft conducting reconnaissance, and again at 1025 and 1112, firing upon a tank concentration. Next, the hard-hitting monitor bombarded the town of Capaccia where there was a German infantry observation post with artillery batteries. She hit a mine in the afternoon, taking on a 10-degree list, but was able to counter-flood to reach an even keel. Her damage took her out of action and she was able to steam to Palermo, Sicily for repairs.

The minefields held up the other destroyers' fire for close-in shore support, and held up establishing communications with the shore fire control parties. The *Savannah* was able to establish communications with her shore fire control unit at D-0914. Their first target was the railway gun battery, which was accomplished by firing 57 rounds of 6 inch shells. Beginning at 1132 it fired for an hour on a concentration of tanks at a range of 17,450 yards, forcing a retreat. Another target was the German force in the town of Capaccia. All told she answered eleven target calls, expending 645 rounds of 6 inch shells. She used her spotting planes and the Army's P-51 Mustangs.

Flagship *Philadelphia's* D-Day off Salerno beaches, the first of ten days, began at D-0943 with an enemy gun battery as the target. Launching a spotter plane at 1033, she fired on a bridge and was able to stop approaching Panzer tank units. She launched another plane at 1057, then, along with the destroyer *Ludlow,* followed a mine sweeper through a swept channel close to the beach shore; at 1220 they began firing on a German artillery battery that was shelling beached LST's on Blue beach. The fire continued until 1309, knocking out the enemy guns. She recovered her planes, launching another spotter at 1400 along with one of

Savannah's planes. They found a group of 35 German tanks concealed in a thicket adjacent to Red beach. The *Philadelphia's* 6 inch shells flushed them out, keeping them under fire as they retreated to the rear and destroying seven of the tanks. As she continued on into the evening, shelling at spotted targets, she expended 305 rounds of those 6 inch shells.

The destroyer *Bristol* helped to take out the bridge over the Sele River to halt the German counterattacks. By noon the *Edison* was able to thread the minefield and begin operating with the *Bristol* about 6,000 yards off shore. Both fired on targets including artillery batteries, trucks, and counterattacking tanks. They were being attacked by a German shore gun battery that they couldn't locate. Between them they expended over 1,400 rounds of 5 inch shells. The shore fire control party credited them with knocking out 11 tanks. By 1145 the *Ludlow* took a position about 1,600 yards off of Blue beach, a very dangerous beach, giving vitally important support to the LCT's that were landing under fire from a German shore battery. She observed their gunfire flashes, quickly put her guns on that target, and took them out. At noon a two-gun mobile battery moved in to fire on the LST's, but the *Ludlow* detected it and destroyed it. That scenario was repeated two more times in the afternoon. Another mobile unit came into play, but it was out of her 5 inch gun range, so the coordinates were passed to the *Philadelphia.* The *Ludlow* was known as "Lucky Lud" for her timely and accurate gun fire. She expended 465 rounds of 5 inch shells on fifteen different targets.

The *Woolsey* arrived inside the minefield about 1130 and began firing upon Pasetum, helping the troops to capture it. She wanted to get in contact with her shore fire control party, which was finally established at 1625. In the meantime, at 1313 she came under enemy gunfire with several shells straddling her. Unable to locate the battery, she moved back out of range. They received one call to help the *Bristol* shoot up some enemy tanks.

The landing craft came under heavy enemy gunfire throughout the day, including air raids on both the beaches and the transports. Incredibly, only eleven of the small craft were destroyed by enemy gunfire. Both small boat and transport crews worked around the clock to supply the Army, and despite the fact that less important supplies were stored in the transports on top of the materials needed more urgently and early in the landings, General Clark felt they had achieved as much as could be expected under strong enemy defenses. The Germans were still able to challenge the Allies from the air, with full control over the roads, railway, and communication.

Northern Attack Force

Instead of the friendly Italians they expected, the Northern Attack Forces were confronted by the tough German 16th Panzer Division. The northern beach, designated "Uncle," was commanded by Lt. General McCreery with the X Corps' 46th landing six miles south of Salerno City to control the high ground behind Salerno and capture the city. The 56th, with Major General Graham, landed on "Sugar" and "Roger" beaches south of the Asa River to capture the Montecorvino airfield.

Three Ranger divisions under Lt. Colonel Darby landed east of Saerno on the Sorrento Peninsula at Marino de Vietri, a small sandy beach area. The goal was to sieze the town of Maiori and the highway at the foot of Gap Cava, move through the gap to Nocera, take the railroad junction with the highway running to Naples, destroy all strong defense points, and take the high points.

The British Army and Royal Marine commandos under Brigadier Laycock, RM, with a U.S. mortar battery, moved to destroy nearby coastal defenses, seize the town of Vietri, and took the gap highway east of Salerno.

The U.S. Rangers landed ashore with no opposition. They succeeded in landing their supplies and equipment by 0615. They moved out, took the town of Mariori and the main road, and then went up Gap Cava to Nocera, taking control of the railroad junction and highway, all uncontested.

As for the British commandos, the H.M.S. *Blackmore* and a gunboat silenced a shore battery prior to their boat waves landing, but they were otherwise unopposed at H-0330. The next hours all went according to plan. The Germans moved into the town of Vietri with mortars and machine guns mounted on several houses. Their fire drove off the British landing crafts. After several hours of fighting, the commandos managed to drive the Germans out of the town. The Royal Marines, in sector La Molina about a mile inland, were counter-attacked by a German force with tanks, pinning them down for several hours. All of these landings were subsidiary to the main operation of the Northern Attack Forces.

The Uncle group with 15 American LST's started deploying their troops at 0121 off Red and Green beaches, commanded by Admiral Conolly, R.N. aboard the troop transport *Biscayne*. They came under fire from 88mm guns, with casualties when one of the LST's was hit three times. Admiral Conolly ordered the three Hunt-Class destroyers to engage the enemy gunfire, and ordered the gunboats to lay a smoke screen for the ships. The destroyers had to position themselves just one mile off the beach, a bold move that paid off by silencing the 88's.

Shortly before the landing boats made it ashore, the LCR's (Rocket Crafts)

discharged their 790 rockets onto Red beach to explode the minefields. As the first boat waves landed at H-0330, they encountered stiff resistance. They were able to overcome it quickly and moved inland. At 0645 the boat waves carrying artillery and ammunition started landing, along with the Brigadier commander and his staff. The LCR with its rockets intended for Green beach was off course by a half mile, and their rockets fell on Amber beach, Sugar Group. It left the enemy strong point on Green beach intact, with the two assault battalions of the 46th Division to be on the wrong side of the Asa River. The boats had to follow the rocket boat, so the first wave destined for Green beach instead landed on Amber beach, with three more waves following at 15 minute intervals. This crowded the 56th Division's Amber beachhead.

These battalions worked north to hook up with the rest of their brigade, encountering strong German troops with tanks. Without their vehicles and support weapons, they suffered many casualties. Later, when their equipment started to arrive on Green beach, these troops came under heavy fire from 88's, pinning them down until those guns were taken out with naval gunfire.

The German artillery and Luftwaffe concentrated on Uncle beach head and ship roadstead between 0417 and 0537, making those areas very hot and uncomfortable. One LCI reported being straddled by nearby bomb hits. Several bombs exploded close to USS *Nauset*, setting her on fire, knocking out her power, and causing extensive underwater damage. Tugboats tried to beach her, but an explosion broke her in two, leaving 59 casualties from a crew of 113.

The LST's came under heavy gunfire with great damage to them. LST-386 hit a floating mine as it approached the Green beach carrying the pontoon causeway, demolishing the causeway and leaving 43 casualties. LST-375, approaching Red beach at 0715, suffered two direct hits and several more near-hits while unloading. A gasoline fire broke out and an elevator cable was severed, so she couldn't unload the vehicles on the main deck. The 375 struggled into the roadstead to repair the cable and patch holes, and after several hours managed to get the vehicles down on the tank deck. During an air raid at 2155 she received a direct hit from a bomb, which exploded in her bottom, but she managed to stay afloat to land her remaining vehicles the next morning and departed with the convoy that evening.

At Green beach, LST-336 beached at 0745, where part of the 46th Division troops were pinned down 150 yards inland. The 336 received 11 hits while unloading, with three killed and some 19 men wounded among embarking troops. Admiral Conolly ordered Green beach unloading craft to stop at 0851 and diverted them to Red beach. The landings here in Uncle sector were vigorously contested,

and many small landing craft were damaged. At 1241 reports came in that the Germans had taken Green beach and started to concentrate their efforts on Red beach. Green beach was retaken later, and reopened the next morning for landing crafts.

Commodore Oliver directed the landing for General Graham's 56th Division, 169 Brigade's two battalions on Sugar beach, and 167th Brigade's two battalions on Roger beach. Their first wave hit the beach at 0340. Sugar became crowded due to the rocket boat misdirected from Green beach. The Roger beach waves landed at 0350 south of their designated beach, a fortunate mistake as an undetected 88mm battery was set up for that beach area. At daylight the battery came alive and sank the LCT heading for Roger beach. A nearby support gunboat moved in, firing guns and mortars to silence the 88's; a destroyer later destroyed the battery. There were no serious enemy assaults on Roger during the D-Day, but as usual they had congestion with the vehicles and supplies throughout the day. Support ships fired on marked enemy artillery, tanks, and strong points, but the German's mobile 88mm units made it hostile on the beach. The British naval fire support were busily engaged from 0215 on, but the heavy shore guns in the mountains and hills were so well camouflaged that the gun flashes and smoke could not be detected off shore.

Smoke screens provided good cover for approaching landing craft and the ship roadstead. The destroyers, along with HMS *Blankney*, spent the day pounding any gun batteries that could be detected. Some of the destroyers steamed so close to shore to fire on enemy tank groups that they came under rifle fire along with fire from the 88's. The *Loyal* received five hits from mobile artillery while firing on a munitions dump, which it destroyed. Guns from the *Nubian* were decisive in breaking up and driving off a strong counter-attack of enemy tanks and troops upon the 167th Brigade. The destroyers that were hit sailed into the roadstead to make temporary repairs before returning to action.

Air defense, after dawn to 1800, provided fighter planes from the airfields on Sicily for support air cover over the ship roadstead and beach heads, a radius of 50 miles. The British escort carriers operated well out to sea. The Luftwaffe was able to put in a few feeble appearances after their heavy early morning attacks. Reports show that there were four "Red" alerts on D-Day, with about the same for the next couple of days. The fighter control director only plotted 156 enemy air raids, most of which were intercepted by fighter planes and broken up before entering into the assault areas. With the enemy's new secret control bomb, the Air Force changed their tactics to go on the offense, with more missions, rather than continue a defensive posture.

The British sector was less opposed than at the American sector, but by D-

Day's evening they became just as heavily engaged ashore. Their front lines ran about two miles inland and just three miles from Salerno, their objectives not attained, leaving a seven-mile gap between them and the American sector. Their naval gunfire also carried support for the troops ashore on D-Day.

The American landings at Paetum and the British at Montecorvino Airport were the most fiercely contested battles to-date of World War II. These soldiers were valiant while suffering under severe fire, yet they could not have carried on without the outstanding performance of the heavy gunfire support from the naval forces.

"D" +1 - 0455, 10 September: A big air raid. The Germans dropped flares all over the area. It sure lit up the area. In the glare of the flares and darkness you could not see the 24 FW-109 bombers. The planes were too high for us to shoot at them with our 20 MM guns. They hit one Liberty transport, setting it on fire. I'm sure there were some close misses that caused damage to some of the ships.

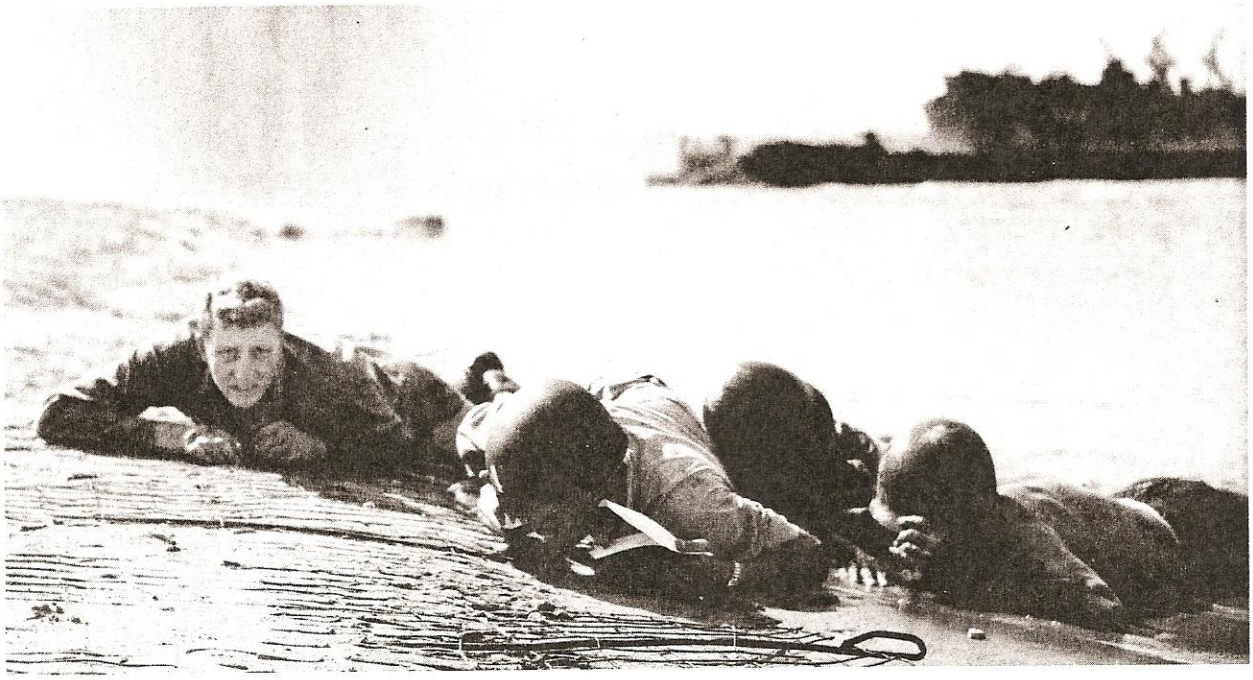
As we weighed anchor 0545 to look for the *Carroll*, the Liberty ship was still burning. After returning the boat, we sailed over to transport *Jefferson* to pick up a Navy Beach Platoon. At 0915, we landed them on the beach. There was still heavy fighting inland, lots of supplies and vehicles being landed on the beach.

Captain Fabian sent me to find the Beachmaster, to let him know we were the Traffic Control Vessel. We could not make radio contact. The counter attack created much congestion with the landing forces time table. I did not get very far when I was challenged by an M.P. He had no idea where the Beachmaster was. He offered to help me find him. Hustling down the beach, we heard the anti-aircraft guns shooting. Turning around, here came four ME-109's over the mountain, out of the morning sun. Just that quick, one swooped down on the beach, guns blazing, the shells hitting the sand. I hit the deck in a DUKW rut in the sand. I hollered to the soldier to get down. I laid flat with my face in the sand. I could hear the guns and the bullets hitting. I tried hard hugging down tighter. Now, I could hear the whine and thud of the bullets hitting, kicking up sand, stinging me. At first, I thought it was shrapnel from the bullets, hitting me. Then I heard the roar of the plane as it flew over us. They were gone! I survived and was so happy that I was saved.

Someone shouted, "They're coming again!" All I could think was to get the hell off the beach. I jumped up, hollering at the M.P., "Let's get out of here." I looked at him lying there. He was trembling. God! He's been hit.

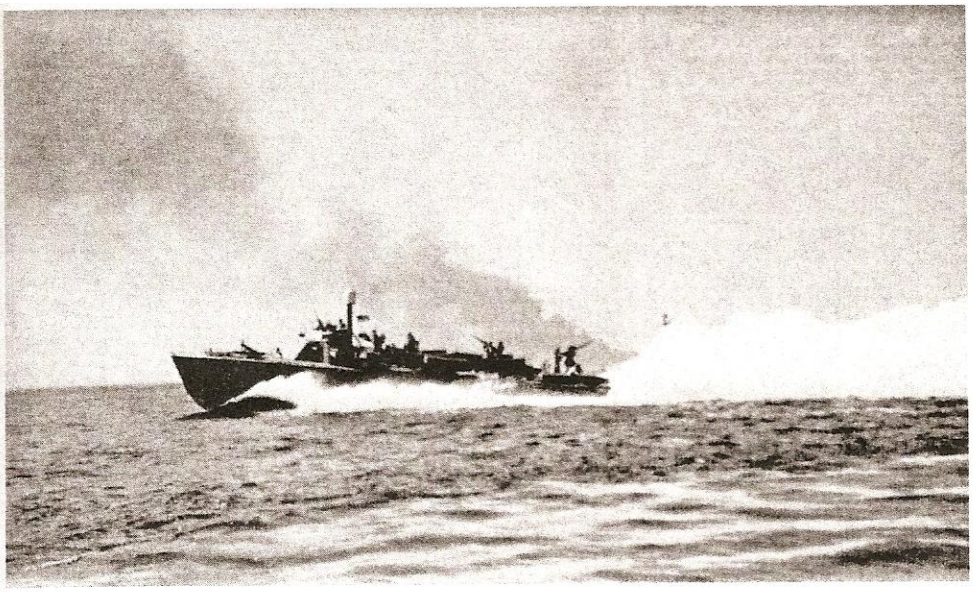
"Are you O.K?!"

"Yea!"

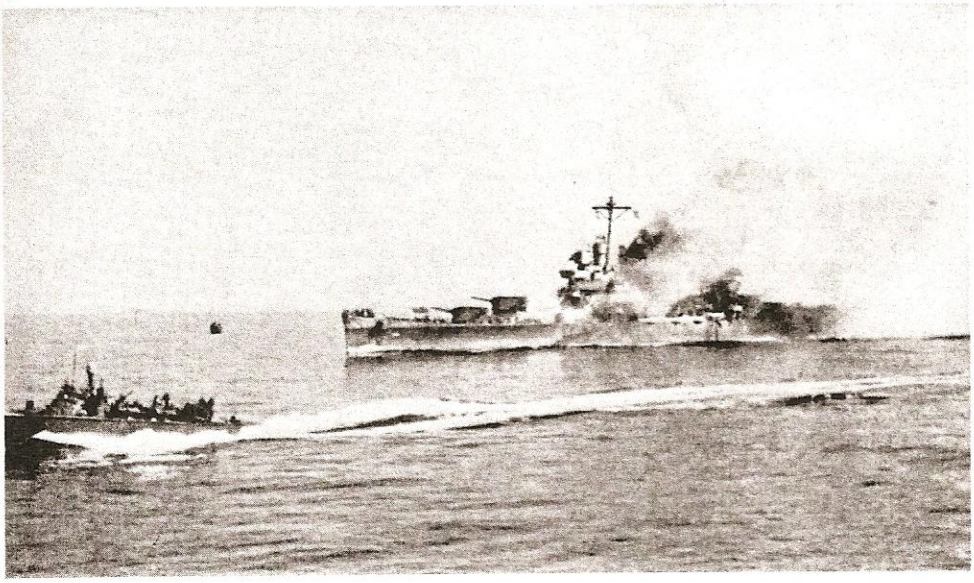


GIs HUG THE BLAZING BEACH OF SALERNO . . . . they hit the ground as Nazi planes bomb the landing area

MOVING UP THE BEACH AT SALERNO . . . . troops just brought ashore by Coast Guard landing craft move forward and pass a casualty being returned to a transport.



U.S. motor torpedo boat laying smoke



U.S.S. *Savannah* hit by radio-guided bomb

Scenes in Salerno Roadstead

I helped him up and yelled, “Run for the sand dune!” I picked up his rifle and ran after him. We got to the dune and climbed over the sand dune into an impact crater with a couple of soldiers. Someone said, “They’re ours, P38’s, six of them!” They were in hot pursuit of the ME 109’s.

As we took count of ourselves, we found three soldiers in the fox hole. We laughed and talked a bit. The M.P. was still shaken up. He told us this was the first time he was under fire. I told him, “The next time don’t forget your rifle, as you might need it.” We also assured him he would get over the shock. I often think I should have asked that soldier his name.

I found the Beachmaster. He has been busy setting up a new CP (command post). It had been chaos, for their previous CP had been hit and the radio damaged. He felt they would be set up in about 30 minutes. I started back down the beach to the ship. I wanted to get back to the ship where I felt secure. I was in a little bit of shock, too, which happens after these close attacks. To this day, I still hear the bullets hitting the beach and feel the stinging sand.

The “89" pulled off the beach during the attack so I had to wait for them to come in and retrieve me. I had to swim to the ship, but it felt good to be back on board. I reported my mission to the Captain. He was very concerned about my well-being, said he was glad I didn’t get hurt and thanked me for my report.

At 1435, another dive bomb attack. Four FW-109’s. This time I was able to get to my 20 MM gun and shoot back at them. They were after the cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Savannah*.

11 September, D+2, we were still on Traffic Control Duty about 2400 yards off the Salerno beaches. The Traffic Control Duty was conducted by Commander Unger, USCG, with our officers coordinating supplies and troops with the Beachmaster and the transports to guide the direction of the troops and supplies to their designated beaches. The destroyers were still shooting at targets identified by the Army, and we could see and hear the intensity of those guns. On several occasions we also had enemy shells exploding on the water around us.

At 0930 the Luftwaffe attacked with twelve FW-109 dive bombers, approaching from the north. They were after the cruisers. As we watched the air attack we saw a bomb hit the *Savannah*. She laid about 1000 yards off our starboard side. It took the hit about mid-ship. We heard the explosion, then saw the black smoke and flames. Two salvage tugs, *Hopi* and *Moreno*, came to assist. They

moored alongside the *Savannah* and had the fires out in a short time. She settled low in the water with an even keel. At 1800 she retired under her own power, screened by four destroyers bound for Malta. After some repairs she sailed, escorted, back to the States, was refitted, and returned to service. Later we learned that she was hit with a 660 pound radio-controlled bomb dropped by a Dorner 217 at high altitude. More than 100 sailors were killed by the bomb.

The *Boise* arrived that afternoon to replace the *Savannah*.

That evening, at 2215, our LCI group started to get underway to join a convoy of unloaded attack transports and freighter ships and eight destroyers. A short time later the Luftwaffe bombers began dropping their flares and bombs. Heavy anti-aircraft fire streaked the sky. The flares illuminated the ships behind us. These bombers, probably JU-88's, came in at a medium altitude. Again, fortunately, we were out of the transport area.

The convoy hadn't sailed very far when the destroyer *Rowan,* screening the convoy, was struck by a torpedo from the German U-371 submarine. The destroyer buckled, and both bow and stern angled upward. Later we learned that several other destroyers picked up the survivors—just 71 of the 273 men on board.

On 12 September, around 0400, our LCI group left the convoy that was bound for Algiers, and sailed to Palermo, arriving at 0830. As we lay at anchor that morning, we witnessed a historical event: Appearing on the horizon was a light squadron of the Italian Navy, consisting of 12 torpedo boats, four corvettes, a number of subchasers, and some small vessels. They were under the command of Rear Admiral Pollone, flag aboard the *Alisco*, and had slipped away from the Germans to surrender under the American flag. It was quite a sight, and it scared us at first as we wondered whether they were really surrendering. The only heavy ships we had in the harbor were some destroyers, and I don't think it would have been a good match if we'd had to fight them. It was a great, historical sight.

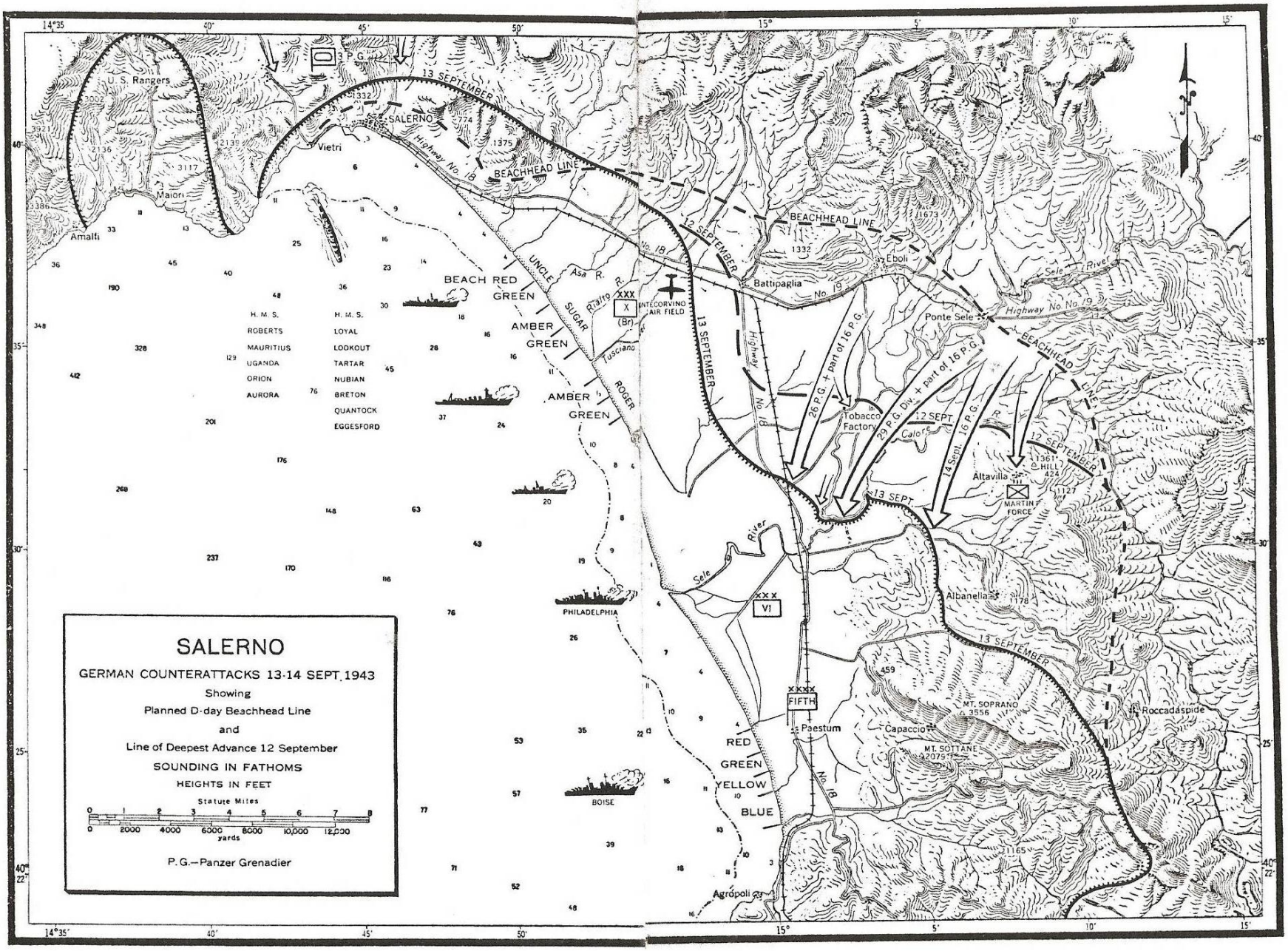
On the night of 8 and 9 September, their light squadron broke out of Bastia, Corsica under fire from the German's shore batteries and their E-boats. Later they returned and beat-up the new enemies, taking over the port. Temporary repairs were made to the squadron, and they left again for Palermo. Here the ships were furnished with food and other supplies, and then proceeded to Malta.

That evening there was a fierce electrical storm. The lightening came from everywhere. It struck several barrage balloons, making quite a spectacular display. Never before, or since, have had I experienced such lightening.

Photo by Major J. C. Hatler, USA

Brolo, Scene of the Amphibious Landing 11 August 1943

The town is in the middle distance, obscured by cloud shadow; Monte Creole rises behind it


SALERNO
GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS 13-14 SEPT. 1943
Showing
Planned D-day Beachhead Line
and
Line of Deepest Advance 12 September
SOUNDING IN FATHOMS
HEIGHTS IN FEET
Statute Miles
yards
P.G.—Panzer Grenadier
10 P.G.
U.S. Rangers
13 SEPTEMBER
SALERNO
Vietri
Maiori
Amalfi
Highway No. 18
BEACHHEAD LINE
BEACH RED
GREEN
AMBER
GREEN
AMBER
GREEN
UNCLE
SUGAR
ROGER
Asa R.
Rialto R.
Tusciano
H.M.S. ROBERTS
MAURITIUS
UGANDA
ORION
AURORA
H.M.S. LOYAL
LOOKOUT
TARTAR
NUBIAN
BRETON
QUANTOCK
EGGESFORD
PHILADELPHIA
BOISE
MONTECORVINO AIR FIELD
12 SEPTEMBER
Battipaglia
Eboli
Sele River
Ponte Sele
Highway No. 19
26 P.G. + part of 16 P.G.
29 P.G. Div. + part of 16 P.G.
14 Sept. 16 P.G.
Tobacco Factory
Altavilla
HILL 424
MARTIN FORCE
Albanella
Paestum
Capaccio
MT. SOPRANO
MT. SOTTANE
Roccadaspide
Agropoli
FIFTH
VI
RED
GREEN
YELLOW
BLUE

Litter bearers wading to landing craft at Salerno. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Artillery being landed on the beach at Salerno. The LCVP is from the USS *James O'Hara.* (U.S. Navy photograph)

U.S. Troops landing on the beach at Salerno.
(U.S. Navy photograph)

Salerno Beach on D-Day. LST are delivering tanks. In the center are medical battalions, which had collecting companies on the beach as early as 0400 9 September 1943
(U.S. Navy photograph)

Battle for the Beachhead

Early action ashore in the first days was hard to follow; nothing went as planned. The fighting started before the first waves hit the shores, with no let-up. The German's made it clear that Italy was too great a prize to give up without a fight, and they offered strong, skillful units and a determined Luftwaffe in its defense.

Had the diversion plan, set up to secure a bridgehead in Italy's mainland at the "toe" off the Messina Straights, gone off as scheduled on 30-31 August, it may have been a different situation. But General Montgomery postponed it until 3 September, with a landing at the narrowest part of the "foot" hoping to trap the German units and draw them away from Salerno. It came too late.

The German command in Italy found our D-Day confusing and critical. They quickly recovered. By 10 September the Herman Goering Division, part of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the whole LXXV Corps with the 16th Panzer Division at Salerno all hastened to Battipaglia, north of the Montecorvino airport and the Sele River Valley toward Paestum with General Herr in Command.

The American sector got reorganized on Red Beach, brought in the floating reserve two regiments of the 45th Division, and consolidated their positions. On D+1 they pushed through against mounting opposition, reached Agropoli on the coast and through inland hill country to points near Persano on the Sele River just short of Ponte Sele. The 16th Panzer Division moved out from Battipaglia while the Herman Goering tanks moved down the gap toward Maiori.

Heavy fighting occurred here in the British sector on 10 and 11 September. The enemy dominated these high ridges north of Maiori and the ridges facing the Montecorvino Airfield, with artillery holding the X Corps on the beach. They remained under enemy fire for several days. The German guns continued to range on the Salerno harbor, leaving it useless to the Allies for two weeks. Here British naval gunfire answered 37 calls with her destroyers *Tartar*, *Lookout*, and *Loyal* continuing their support. *Loyal* left at 1030 for Palermo to replenish ammunition and was back on the firing line the next morning. The destroyer *Nubian* fired 341 rounds of 4.7 inch shells, destroying enemy gun batteries firing on the British troops. Her targets from F.O.O. were an ammunition dump and several enemy vehicle concentrations. Later, at 1648, she shifted to countering tank attacks. The H.M.S. cruiser *Mauritius*, Rear Admiral Harcourt's flagship, fired 500 rounds at these targets plus road intersections, with the cruisers *Uganda* and *Orion*, and the monitor *Roberts* joining in on these shoots. "Target destroyed" and "Battery silenced" were the closeout comments on a specific target. This cumulative naval

effort checked German attacks on their troops as they held their important positions.

The commandos and the 46th Division got through the pass from Vietri against little resistance to hold a good position on the enemy heavy infantry and tank attack. They suffered 198 casualties from a force of 350. The U.S. Rangers here in the British sector held firm in their dug-in position on the 4,000 foot-tall Mount Chianzi against determined German attacks. Maintaining their supplies of water and ammunition was a major problem. Even the mules collapsed while bringing the supplies from the beach up the steep path. From this high observation post they directed naval and artillery on the roads, and on German troops and their vehicles.

The American 4th Battalion seized Monte Pendo. The position was far to the left of the 3rd Battalion, a gap of several miles between them. On 12 September, General Clark directed a battalion from the 143rd Infantry, with tanks, artillery, and tank destroyers with engineers into beaching crafts to Maiori, to strengthen this line of important positions overlooking the passes between Salerno and Naples.

The Luftwaffe's air attacks on the troops were little more than nuisance raids, such as the one I was caught in on the beach, but the attacks on the ship roadstead were more serious, using their guided radio-controlled bombs—such as the one that put the cruiser *Savannah* out of action the morning of 11 September when we were still on Traffic Control Duty.

By nightfall our Army's penetration reached about ten miles inland, tapering off to about a mile on the north flank. The 157th Regiment was deployed between the VI and X Corps north of the Sele River Valley to strengthen the line. The German resistance had been strong, but General Clark reported to the British commander General Alexander that he would be ready to launch an attack north through Vietri towards Naples.

Despite the Germans' rapid reinforcements, with partial success in their counter-attacks, they were not happy. The 16th Panzer Division's commander reported to General Herr that his situation was critical and that he was under heavy pressure at Battipaglia, with their lines breached by the American tanks near Persano.

Reports coming into General Clark's C.P. at Paestum, 0930 12 september, said elements of Herman Goering Division from Naples were identified opposite British X Corps, with the 15th, 16th, and 29th Panzer tank divisions. General Alexander had asked Montgomery to hurry and bring up the Eighth Army on 10 September. On the 12th he sent his chief of staff to explain the urgency of their situation. But again he was late; his advance patrol didn't arrive until the afternoon of 16 September, making contact with the American VI Corps after the crisis had

passed.

As the VI Corps 142nd Infantry Battalion tried to get their occupying position on Hill 424 behind Altavilla organized—an important position since it commanded a complete view of the Salerno Plain and beaches—a German counter-attack drove them off. At the same time, the elements of the 45th Division were able to get the enemy out of the tobacco factory with the help of gunfire from the cruiser *Philadelphia*, and then captured Persano. In the evening, General Dawley regrouped his troops to strengthen their lines and attack Hill 424 in the morning.

On the extreme left flank, the U.S. Rangers captured several more heights overlooking the town of Castellammare and sent a night patrol into the town. There they ran into stiff resistance. The Germans were concerned that this was an Allied move toward Naples. The Rangers did not exploit their positions, but were strong enough to dominate the Sorrento Peninsula, controlling the view on the railway and road at Nocera Gap.

By 12 September the British still had no significant gain in movement. The 167th Brigade's 56th Division was driven out of Battipaglia, sustaining such heavy losses they had to be relieved. With the support of the monitor *Roberts* and the destroyers they held their beachhead, having suffered 3,000 casualties—seven percent of their strength—by that evening. The Germans rapidly built strength to hold allies at the beachhead. It put a different note in General Clark's thinking of a retreat from the southern beaches and concentrating his army on the north side of the Sele River.

Crisis of 13-14 September

The Montecorvino Airport was in British hands on 10 September, but it was unusable while still under German gunfire. British engineers—the Sappers—constructed an emergency strip near Paesterm by the 12th so the British carriers could land 26 of their Seafires while they left to refuel at Palermo. Here the Seafires operated until the African Air Force could bring in their planes. The Sappers continued working and had the second one ready by 13 September, along with two more emergency strips ready in the X Corps area.

On the night of 12-13 September, General Dawley strengthened the front lines to his left and shifted the 36th Battalion, closing the dangerous gap between them and the British, when he received word that the Germans had retaken Battipaglia. The three battalions composed of elements of the 142nd and 143rd Infantry counter-attacked Altavilla and Hill 424 on 13 September. By late afternoon the Germans stopped them and they had to withdraw that night.

The German counter-attack at 1540 on 13 September comprised of six tanks with infantry on the VI Corps' left flank, at the confluence of the Sele and Calore Rivers. They attacked the 1st Battalion infantry dug in on the north slope of the tobacco factory. At the same time 15 tanks rolled down the road from Persano followed by the 76th Panzer Grenadier Regiment with their field artillery in tow. Our 1st Battalion was driven off the hill back to the railroad tracks, again losing the tobacco factory. The 2nd Battalion's 143rd Division posted at Ponte Sele was forced back to the Calore River, losing 508 men during the retreat battle.

At 1715 the main body of German tanks came down the road from Ponte Sele to drive out on the Salerno plain and take Paestum. Fortunately the bridge had been burned down earlier, and they couldn't deploy on the rolling open fields. The deep ditches on both sides of the road made it difficult to maneuver the tanks and equipment. Our 189th and 158th were set up with field artillery to stop the attack. Because of the crisis, Lt. Colonels Muldoon and Funk, U.S.A., had stripped their batteries to all but minimum gun crews. They grabbed every stray G.I., armed them with rifles and machine guns, and placed them between the field artillery batteries on the hillside. Together their gunfire on the tanks forced all surviving tanks to retreat. There were no shore-fire control parties among our defenders to direct naval fire on the enemy tanks during this critical battle.

The naval gunfire was busy brushing off the enemy air attacks trying to hit the cruisers. The *Philadelphia* was able to elude two radio-controlled bombs aimed at her, and they exploded harmlessly in the water.

After the tank counter-attacks at the river fork, our troops were badly beat-up with few reserves to deploy that evening; our condition looked very bad. The British X Corps were heavily engaged with the enemy. At General Clark's headquarters at Paestum, they were considering evacuating the VI Corps from the beachhead and land them on the north side of the Sele River to help the X Corps. Admiral Hewitt was alerted to prepare plans for the evacuation.

The British X corps were engaged at their beachhead front on 13 September, losing Battipaglia but still holding the Montecorvino Airport with the help of the naval guns. The H.M.S. *Roberts*, with three cruisers and six destroyers, delivered shell after shell on the German troops, batteries, tanks, and road intersections as they received target locations from the F.O.O. parties. The cruiser *Uganda* was hit by a radio-controlled bomb at 1440. The bomb penetrated seven decks before exploding. The crew pumped out 1300 tons of water and shored up the bulkheads, and the next morning she was under tow of the U.S.S. *Narragansett* with three destroyers. Later the destroyers *Nubian* and *Loyal* narrowly escaped radio-guided bombs. With the naval firepower reduced and the ships on line running low on

ammunition, Read Admiral Conolly ordered the H.M.S. *Aurora* and *Penelope* up from Malta to help. They arrived at sunrise 14 September.

Important reinforcements were ordered up 13-14 September. The 82nd Airborne Division cancelled plans to be dropped on Rome to take part, and some of them were landed at Maiora to reinforce the U.S. Rangers. Then General Clark requested General Ridgway to organize an airdrop at his southern lines in the Sele River basin. It was set up quickly and the first planes took off at 1930 with full equipment. C-47's and C-53's, 82 of them total, took off from airfields in Sicily, dropping more than 600 troops right behind the VI Corps line, with another 1900 coming down the next night. Mindful of what happened at Sicily, General Ridgway ordered that no anti-aircraft fire be used on the beachhead and ship roadstead for those two nights.

The night of 13-14 September the Army officers worked on regrouping their troops and arranging a new line of defense. At dawn the Germans renewed their attacks with tanks and infantry, but this time the VI Corps and X Corps held their lines. The British 46th Division was dug-in well on the hills of Salerno, with the 56th still on the plains south of Battipaglia under enemy sights. They repelled a strong tank attack that night, and in the morning moved closer to the dangerous gap between the VI and X Corps.

On 14 September the German 26th Panzer Division arrived from the south along with the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division R.C.T. group from the north to reinforce the German command. By the end of the day on the 14th, the situation for the VI Corps had improved.

The cruiser *Philadelphia* continued to shell designated enemy targets from the fire control parties onshore on 14 September, aiming at tanks, batteries, road intersections, and troops, and receiving radio messages back thanking them for their help. *Boise* then relieved her, firing 600 rounds. At 1503 *Philadelphia* got into it again for two more hours. At 2130 *Boise* went into a rapid fire call on troops, unloading 72 rounds, followed by another call and another 121 shells. At 2130 the shore party caught sight of enemy troops coming from Eloloia, and she fired on them. All through the night of 14-15 September the *Boise* fired on calls. The British had much the same in their sector with four cruisers and four destroyers into the shooting.

Although the Allied troops and naval support were successful in holding off the counter-attacks, on 14 September the situation was still grave. Admiral Hewitt sent an urgent message to Fleet Admiral Cunningham: "We need heavy aerial and naval bombardment behind the enemy position, using battleships and other heavy naval ships. Are any such ships available?"

D+6: September 15

On 14 September our flotilla received the 58th Infantry division troops and sailed out of Port Palermo, with good weather conditions and a smooth sea. Our convoy was escorted by three destroyers and arrived at Salerno beachhead the next morning, September 15. We landed the troops on Red Beach and returned to the transport roadstead where we anchored. The naval guns were still pounding the German shore batteries and their troops.

About noon on September 15 the British battleships *Valiant* and *Warspite* arrived, escorted by six destroyers. At 1720 they added their 15-inch guns to the firing, joining the cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Boise* with their six-inch guns. We could see the shells traveling overhead toward their targets. The firing went on all night into the next evening, 15 September. The noise and concussions were incredible, shaking the dust out of the compartments' insulation and creating a fog in the ship. The concussions flapped the canvas tarp that hung from a cable over the bulwarks, actually wearing the canvas through and destroying it. You couldn't even think with such continuous noise and concussions. It was reported that the *Boise* alone fired 893 shells that night.

At 2330 another heavy air attack with medium-altitude heavy bombers came here in the roadstead, with flares. The anti-aircraft fire was heavy. The next morning, 1427 on 16 September, the H.M.S. *Warspite* was hit with two radio-guided bombs. She had to withdraw from action under her own power, bound for Malta, but as she sailed she went dead in the water and was taken in tow by the U.S. tugs *Hopi* and *Moreno* after her engine rooms flooded. She was escorted by five destroyers and three cruisers, and arrived at Malta safely.

By evening the gunfire had tapered off and word came that Montgomery's 5th Army finally arrived, making contact with the forces on the beachhead. Our two nights at anchor were subjected to heavy air attacks with flares.

On 16 September the German commander, Gerneral Von Vretinghoff, issued orders for another attack from Naples toward the coastal front at Salerno. They ran into heavy fire from British naval guns plus artillery and tanks, and the attack was quickly halted. On the extreme right the American sector saw all indications that the Germans were retreating. General Marshall Kesselring, in order to evade the shelling, ordered his forces to disengage from the coastal front. Even the Luftwaffe's concentration on the naval gunfire became ineffective.

By the morning of 17 September the Fifth Army was starting to build up their troops, vehicles, and supplies to drive through Naples and on into the Volturno River Valley. The hard, ten-day fight for "Avalanche Beachheads" was successfully

moving into its final phase. The naval guns delivered direct support for the army troops, setting a new standard for naval warfare that wasn't surpassed until the Pacific battles for Okinawa and Iwo Jima. During the Avalanche operation at Salerno the naval forces expended 11,000 tons of shells, far exceeding the air forces' total of 3,020 tons of bomb dropped in the Salerno area before the invasion.

On page 292 of his book Sicily-Salerno-Anzio: History of U.S. Naval Operations in WWII, vol. IX, historian Samuel Eliot Morrison noted, "Of the 14 September Vieinghoff (a German officer) wrote that 'the attack this morning pushed on into stiffened resistance, but above all the advancing troops had to endure the most severe heavy fire that had hitherto been experienced; the naval gunfire from at least 16 to 18 battleships, cruisers, and large destroyers lying in the roadstead. With astonishing precision and freedom of maneuver, these ships shot at every recognized target with very overwhelming effect.'"

22 September we sailed from Port Palermo southeast to Port Termini, Sicily to pick up U.S. Airborne troops to be ferried to the Salerno beachhead. Departing at 1700 we arrived the next day at 1230 and landed the troops. The Salerno beach was particularly good for landing crafts; it shelves deeply just off the water's beach edge, so the bow of the L.C.I. can slide up on the beach easily while keeping deep water to under the stern so the engines could pull the ship back off the beach. It made for easy landing without using the stern anchor. After the troops disembarked we returned to the transport roadstead and anchored. The next day, 24 September, we weighed anchor and Flotilla Four set sail for Bizerte, Tunisa. The seas were kicking up, making our voyage rough. At 0900 26 September we arrived at Port Bizerte.

On the 29th we watched the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, making his tour. During the tour he remarked that "the beach head at Salerno was the most hotly contested landing in which American troops have ever participated." The American beachhead at Paetum was the most fiercely contested battle of World War II to-date. Our soldiers fought valiantly, suffered bloody fighting under severe gunfire, and carried on with outstanding performance in the confined beachhead area. Casualties totaled 2,106 dead and another 2,841 wounded.

Montgomery's Eighth Army failed to entrap the German forces in the south, but the Allied forces turned to their immediate objectives of capturing the Italian airbase at Foggia and the port at Naples. By 28 September and 1 October, the American Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army reached their objectives, obtaining for the Allies a first-class seaport (Naples) for supplies, and a large

airbase (Foggia) at their disposal. However, the Germans had systematically destroyed the infrastructure of these facilities, and immense amounts of work were required to put them into use. The Naples Harbor, with scuttled ships and a tangled mass of wreckage, docks, etc., was converted into one of the busiest ports in Italy. The experience here was, to a great degree, responsible for the speed with which the ports in France were made usable after the Normandy invasion.

Admiral Hall, commanding the Southern Forces, broke his flag on the Coast Guard-manned attack transport *Samuel Chase*. The attack transport *Joseph T. Dickman* was the other participating Coast Guard-manned ship. There were several Coast Guard-manned L.S.T.'s involved in landing troops, vehicles, and supplies: L.S.T.'s 12, 17, 25, 26, 175, 327, and 331.

On 14 September, S.S. *Bushrod Washington* was hit by a radio-guided bomb and was a total loss. 15 September, S.S. *James Marshall* was also hit by a radio-guided bomb, but was salvaged and towed to England, ending her career as part of a "Mulberry" artificial harbor in the Normandy operation. The British hospital ship *Newfoundland* was bombed during the night of the 13th and had to be abandoned and sunk. Three Liberty ships were sunk and two others were damaged.

The toll for Operation Avalanche was high:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing
U.S. Navy	296	421	551
British Navy	83	43	----
U.S. Army	788	2,841	1,318
British Army	982	4,060	2,230

After Avalanche the supplies and troop build-ups were diverted from Salerno Harbor to Naples Harbor. Within a month there was not an Allied soldier or sailor to be found on the Salerno plain. The native population was busily engaged in clearing the war debris and preparing for the winter plowing.

CHAPTER 8

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

"Rock Bo," lookout shouted.

"Where-away," O.D. (Officer on Duty) reported.

"Two points on the starboard bow. Object sighted Rock of Gibraltar."

Emerging on the horizon reflecting in the afternoon sun was the Rock's craggy face. The report vibrated through the ship. All hands duty free scrambled topside for a look. The meniscus of the rock excited the crew as we sailed west towards the Straits of Gibraltar, this time in the light of day. We could view the Rock along the east coast of its peninsula. Ancient seafarers referred to the rock as one of the Pillars of Hercules, believing that it marked the end of the world. It's now known affectionately to locals as "Gib" and is home to more fish 'n' chips plates with a pint of bitter than anywhere in the Mediterranean.

Word has been passed down that we would be making port at Gibraltar for two days to take on fuel. The port crew could go on liberty today after we dock. I, being on the starboard crew, would be on board making preparation to fuel. The harbor was filled with British and American war ships.

Liberty was granted to the LCI crews, who soon ran into the British Sailor. Unfortunately, the British Sailor didn't care too much for the American Sailor because the American Sailor was paid more money than they were. A little disagreement started between them. The results of the brawls left the flotilla with more casualties than we had in all previous amphibious operations in the Mediterranean. That did it. Needless to say all liberties were canceled and I did not get to go ashore to visit the "Gib." Sailors will be sailors!

Before departing Bizerte, Tunisia the later part of September and early October, the flotilla went through the dry docks to clean the ships' bottoms. Here we scrapped the barnacles off and painted the bottoms. The "89" went in dry dock 8 October.

What a time we had! We scraped about 2 inches-plus of thick barnacles off the bottom. This was all new to me. Barnacles! I never gave them a thought. Well, the whole crew had to take a turn too. Chipping away, it was a dirty, wet, smelly job. We couldn't smoke due to the conditions, so we broke out the chewing tobacco. That made for some fun and comments. Some of the guys got sick from the

chewing tobacco. We bitched, laughed, told jokes. What a day!

Zak made some sandwiches with spam from the army ration packages for our lunch. No break for lunch. We worked until darkness set in. Again, we had army rations for dinner. The ship was shut down. Climbed a ladder to board the ship and rolled into our bunks, tired and happy to lay it down. The next morning we finished scraping and painted the bottom. We roughed it, with no lights except emergency lights. On the 10th she was slipped back into the water. What a relief! The crew's next job was to clean up, shower and wash clothing. It was quite an experience for us.

On 16 October the flotilla departed Bizerte, Tunisia sailing west. We arrived the 18th at Oran, Algeria and then departed on the 20th. The flotilla still heading west unescorted. The next day we arrived at Port Gibraltar, British Colony.

After the flotilla finished refueling, 23 October, we departed Port Gibraltar sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic still unescorted, sailing west. The next day I noted a change in our course becoming northwest by west 303 degrees at about 42 degrees latitude. I began to surmise that we were heading towards England. Coming off watch passing the chart room, I stuck my head in and said to Lou, "Heading for England?" He nodded his head. Due to silence we could not discuss this.

About 1300 we spotted a German reconnaissance plane HE-111. This put the flotilla in an uncomfortable mind. So we were on the lookout for U-boats and enemy dive bomber planes. The next day we were on a new heading, north by west 348 degrees about 48 degrees latitude. It's England.

The next day, 26th, we ran into strong winds with very heavy seas, 12 to 16 footers. The ship started its act, up and down the bow plowing into the waves throwing water over the ship. We altered course to north by north 010 degrees. This put the ship quartering the waves rolling her at 25 degrees to 30 degrees. This made her sail smoother. It became very uncomfortable below in the crews quarters. The weather changed to a cold rain that stayed with us through the night into the next day. A big change in the temperature. We started to dig out our warmer clothing.

On 28 October, we sited Lands End, the tip of southern England. About 1500 we could site on the Plymouth Light House. Just before dark we sailed into Port Plymouth, Devonshire and dropped anchor. There were lots of ships in Port Plymouth and the Dart River. It was very dark and rainy. We're all glad to be here

"Serving with a Coast Guard LCI Flotilla in the mighty Allied drive on Nazi-held France, Coast Guardsman William D. Elder, boatswain's mate first class, of 176 Kendall Ave., JERSEY SHORE, PA, is participating in his fourth invasion. He served at Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy, and now at France. Elder is shown here braiding a rope fender for his ship. Coast Guardsmen are serving all over the globe—on land and sea—from the French Invasion to the Pacific atolls."

(U.S. Coast Guard news release)

Gibraltar, Gateway to the Mediterranean.

and that the voyage was not attacked.

As the result of the decision reached at the Quebec Conference, Admiral King issued a revised delivery schedule for landing and beaching craft. He promised to provide for "Overlord" 110 LST, 58 LCI, 146 LCT, 250 LCM and 470 LCVP. Included in this schedule were transfers from VIII Amphibious Forces in the Mediterranean 48 LST, 24 LCI, (Flotilla 4 USCG), 48 LCT and 81 LCVP.

The next day the "89" weighed anchor and sailed out of Port Plymouth past Salcomb, Devon, around the Start Point into Start Bay over to Port Dartmouth, Devon, up the River Dart and dropped anchor. The River Dart was very wide here and deep with hills on both sides. The hillsides were covered with green vegetation, trees and shrubs. We felt at home in this pleasant site. Dartmouth was nearby, on the west side of River Dart. On the eastside, our headquarters were established at Greenway House, Agatha Christie's summer home located near the top of the hill. Maypool House, the big house above Greenway, was accommodations for the Officers and Rated personal group at headquarters.

The other flotilla units were located in Salcomb, Devon and Falmouth, Cornwall along the southern coast. Here they established training centers for LCT, LCI, and LST. Our flotilla now became part of XI Amphibious Force under the Command of Rear Admiral John L. Hall, Force "O" for Omaha. He broke his flag in Amphibious Command Ship *Ancon.* He also supervised the training of ships in Force "U" for Utah with Rear Admiral Don P. Moon. Rear Admiral John Wilker was responsible for all training and readiness of landing and beaching craft. The "O" & "U" used for beach Forces, Neptune (sailors) Sausage (Soldiers), Mulberry (Ship for brakewall) Whales (Concrete Docks), were the secrecy words.

Here I would like to mention that Agatha Christie, in her autobiography, paid a compliment to members of our flotilla. She said, "Though our Admiralty was conducting the negotiation, it would be the United States Navy and Coast Guard which would take over Greenway. I cannot speak too highly of the kindness of the Americans and the care they took of our house. They were very careful with our mahogany doors. They appreciated the beauty of the place too."

CHAPTER 9

OPERATION "OVERLORD" INVASION BUILD-UP

Towards the end of 1943, logistical problems were tremendous. The American forces build-up of equipment and tons of supplies earmarked for the invasion forces, poured into English ports, towns, and fields. You knew the planners had accepted them as pre-requisites for the Allied victory. Military preparations had long been underway before this planned invasion of the Europe Continent. It was essentially a logistic movement for a cross-channel operation to establish a beach- head on the continent.

The U. S. Navy was setting up command bases. Warships and amphibious units were in ever-increasing volume from the River Thames Estuary in the east to Lands End in the west. Ports on Britain's east channel shores were packed with ships and amphibious craft of virtually every kind.

This was the largest and most complicated operation ever undertaken in the world. It involved the movement of over 5000 ships and craft of all types in the first three days, with 1,526,965 U.S. troops and 5,297,306 long tons of supplies and equipment. The Operation "Overlord" therefore was voluminous. The planning and the timing for the tremendous assault movement were very essential for the airborne troops and the main assault forces crossing the channel.

The most important function in the pre-invasion was training. Here we trained with troops conducting beach landing exercises with amphibious crafts, the LST's, LCI's, and LCT's flotilla, based along England's ports on the east coast, near the beaches used from November 1943 through May 1944. Some of the rehearsals were large scale during both day and night. These were as realistic as the commanding officers could make them; so realistic in fact that around midnight 27-28 April 1944 three German E-boats, similar to our P.T. boats, worked their way into the Amphibious group on the outer entrance to Lyme Bay and managed to torpedo LST's 507 and 537, bursting them into flames. The survivors abandoned ship; another, LST-289 was damaged when it opened fired on an E-boat, which then retaliated with a torpedo hit killing over a dozen men. The 289 managed to make port under her own power. The remaining ship along with the two British destroyers covering the forces opened fired on the E-boats, but they escaped by the

use of smoke and high speed. In this brief action 197 sailors and 441 soldiers lost their lives.

As the troops and supplies built up to the climax, the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Air Force bombed German communication, supply installation center, railroads, and airfields towards air supremacy. The Navy undertook to neutralize German sea power with special attention to the submarine bases and E-boats around the Bay of Biscay. The Navy planes patrolling and attack missions helped to make the invasion easier. With the operations of such a magnitude, it was conceivable that the enemy would know an attack would be made. The Allies took precaution to prevent leaks regarding the true intention-where, when and of what strength.

During this period of unusual dry run practice with troops, we received advance school training at the Royal Navy College at Dartmouth. I particularly remember the Gas and Identification Schools.

At the Gas Schools, we received a gas mask in a pouch and were taught how to use it, what to expect, and what it could do for us under a gas attack. We would enter into a gas chamber and put the mask on inside the chamber. We did this numerous times until they felt we were comfortable with it. There were instructions on the gas attack. We had our helmets painted with a yellow strip on the back. If you noticed the stripe on a shipmate's helmet turning green, you would then check your helmet. If it had turned green, you would alert others that we were under a gas attack and put on your gas mask. Then we were issued impregnated clothing-pants, and blouse with hood. They were bulky and heavy, very smelly. This was serious business. They prepared us well.

The Identification School was in a room with a dome ceiling, similar to a planetarium. Here they had ship and airplane models representing the various types of planes and ships that both the Germans and Allies frequently used for an attack force on the continent. It instructed us about the various types by flashing their silhouettes on the domed ceiling, pointing out their features and comparison to other types with similar features.

The most frequent Luftwaffe planes were the heavy bombers JU 88 and HE III, the lighter bombers FW 200 and FW 190/190D. The fighters ME 410 and ME 109's could also carry 500 lb bombs. The FW 200 was also used for reconnaissance flights.

The Allies' planes included RAF heavy bombers, the Lancaster, Lincoln, and Manchester, the Beaufont--a torpedo and mine layer--and the fighter was the

famous Spitfire MKI. The USA bombers were the Liberator B-24, Marauder M-26, Mitchell B-25, B-17 and B-19. The fighters were Lighting P-38, Thunderbolt P-47, and Mustang P-51. Also, the Transport C-47 was used by the paratroopers.

We spent numerous days here studying these airplanes. It was very important, for in the Mediterranean operations, we lost many airplanes to friendly fire.

They kept us busy with landing maneuvers with the troops up and down the southern coast, day and night. Upon our return on the morning, 4 December 43, from Port Falmouth to Port Plymouth we encountered heavy wind and seas. The waves were 20 to 24 feet high. They were washing over the ship's bow hitting the deck house, boom! The "89" would shutter like never before. The wave hitting felt as if we were hitting a solid structure. You had to hold on or get knocked off your feet.

I was on watch that morning. As we continued sailing through the heavy seas, banging us around, all of a sudden the O.D. conned down to me in the bridge and wanted to know why we were heading off course.

I said to Herring, "Are you on our course!"

He reported "I'm trying to hold to the Gyro course heading. The Gyro is acting up!"

I jumped over to look at the Gyro Compass and found that the Cardinal Card, the degree markings on a card, was wobbling back and forth about 100 degrees each way.

I reported, "The Gyro's not holding steady. Give us a heading for the Liquid Compass."

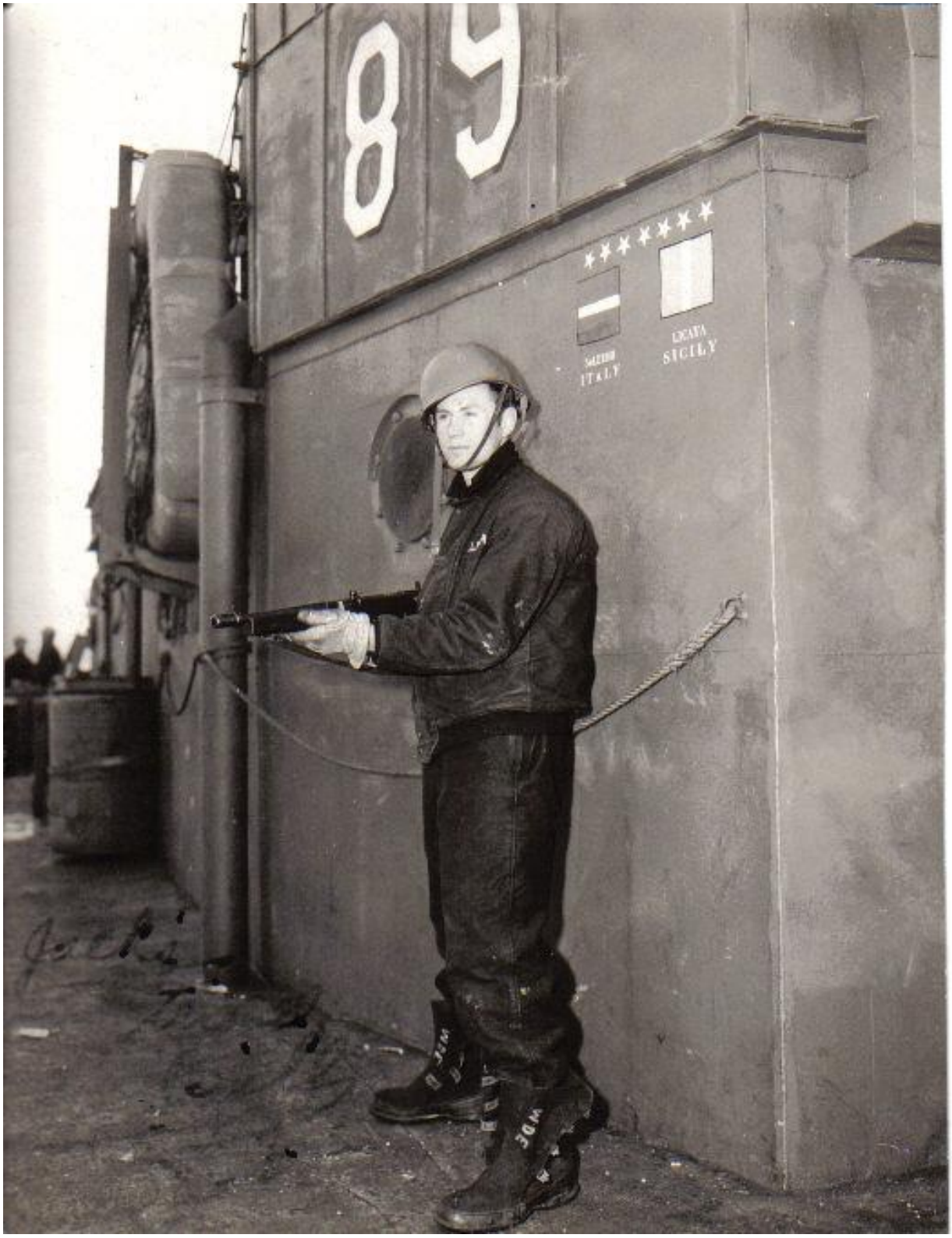
"Course heading 005 degrees."

We finally got back on course. While this was going on I glanced back to see what the other ships were doing. They were holding steady on course. The wave pounding was extremely bad. I was getting concerned that our bow ramps would break loose. They were starting to move up and down with the waves washing over them. Once things start moving on board ship under such condition, it usually spells trouble. That's all we need. I do not want to fight such conditions.

Herring hollered, "The Cardinal Card is turning around."

"Hold your course steady!" I conned up to the Captain as he was now on the fly bridge, "Our liquid compass Cardinal Card is spinning around unable to hold course by compass."

He said "Try to hold a steady course. We will con you, right or left by bearing degree, for your course. We should site the Plymouth lighthouse soon for



That's me dressed in our foul-weather gear, with a gun. The Italian and Sicilian flags mark the 89's campaign events. The stars signify the members of the crew of the ditched B-24 whom we rescued from the sea.

Here's a picture of me with Donald "Lou" Lewis as we were heading to shore for liberty leave during our time in England.

bearing course. Keep a look out for it."

"Roger Captain! Herring! You heard the skipper. Steady as we go."

Shortly thereafter, we sighted the lighthouse and made Port before darkness. The run from Falmouth to Plymouth usually took about four hours plus, but today it took us over six hours. I was happy we made port before the ramps came loose. It would have been a nasty job if we had to go out and secure them down. They could have caused other damage to the ship too. The English Channel weather statistics indicated that a storm could be expected in every month of the year, and fair weather seldom lasted more than a few days.

Ho! I forgot we had a Thanksgiving dinner on the 25 November. Turkey! We could not find Old Tom but Mr. Hilton sure jazzed things up to help the crews' spirits. *(See copy of original menu.)*

Along with all the practice landings and training schools, we got to go on liberty and a few days leave. This was good for the crew morale.

Here was the first we heard the Brits' expression concerning the Americans "Overpaid, Oversexed, and Over here." Lou and I were able to get leave together on 4 November 1943. So, we headed for London boarding a train at the Plymouth station. It was neat boarding the train in a compartment car. I had never seen one before. You could get in and out of either side of the car; a first for everything. About 8 or 10 passengers could sit facing each other.

We arrived in London's "Piccadilly Circus." It was thrilling to be in London. It was part of our history, remembering some of the history I studied in school. It was a busy place, like New York. I was impressed by the buildings with their architectural beauty. I was sad to see some of these buildings destroyed by enemy bombs.

Lou and I drifted around sight seeing. We came upon a U.S.O. Club, and went in to check it out. A busy place, crowded with U.S. forces personnel. That evening we were looking for a place to stay. We found a tavern with rooms. We ordered up a drink and talked with the owner. She had no available rooms. She mentioned we should go down to Brighton. "I can get you reservations at the Norfolk Hotel. You still have time to catch the train to Brighton. It's just a short ride."

I said, "Great! Do it," thinking it was a suburb of London. It was about 30 miles out of London.

"I'll ring them up and make a reservation for you. When you get there take a cab to the Hotel."

Arriving at the Norfolk Hotel and going in, I noticed the elegant large chandelier hanging in the lobby entrance. It must have been 8 feet in diameter with hundreds of lights. We were shown to our room, a very large suite. Boy! We felt we were in heaven. Hot water and a large tub. The bellhop said, "Leave your shoes outside the door and they would get polished up by morning for us."

The next morning at the dining room, we were showed our assigned table with a waiter. Kidding with the waiter, we ordered bacon and eggs.

He said, "Well! That could be arranged, a bit expensive, sausage no bacon."

Sure enough, we had an egg. It tasted good. That morning, we tipped our waiter liberally. After that, when we came to the dining room he took good care of us, making suggestions on food not on the menu.

We spent the day at the hotel just looking around, out of uniform. Later we found out it was a resort hotel on the south coast of England. There was a nice large beach with white sand, similar to Atlantic City's beach. There was nobody on the beach. It was covered with barb wire fencing.

That evening, after dinner, we went in the bar lounge visiting with Royal Airmen. It was great visiting with them hearing stories about the Battle of Britain and their native England. We learned that Tommy Farr, the world Champion Boxer in the 30's, had a tavern here in Brighton.

The next evening, we got a cab and went over to Tommy Farr's Tavern. Meeting Tommy, he saw the U.S. Coast Guard name on my hat band and said, "I did not know that the Coast Guard ever left the New York Harbor," We had a good laugh at that remark and other ones. Tommy introduced us to his two sisters that helped him to run the tavern. Tommy was going blind from his boxing. We had a good meal and a pleasant evening visit. The next evening, we went back for dinner. We returned early and again to visit with the RAF boys at the hotel's bar lounge.

Early morning next day, we caught the train back to Plymouth. Arriving there we took a cab over to Dartmouth. We didn't have enough money to pay the cabby. Lou stayed with the cabby while I went over to our headquarters to borrow a pound note to pay the cabby. We blew all we had.

The next time I went to London on leave, 25 & 29 April 1944, it was to meet my cousin, Captain Ned Elder, Commanding Officer, Company C, 743rd Tank Battalion, at the U.S.O. Club in Piccadilly Circus, London. Ned would call the ship from time to time and I'd get a chance to talk with him. He had talked to our Captain Fabian about letting me go to visit with him. Every time we would set up to meet, Ned would call that he could not meet me for they were moving again. I

found out later his Battalion was the secret DD Tanks, small Sherman Amphibious tanks to be used in the invasion of the continent.

Lou was able to get off and go with me to meet my cousin in London. Arriving I checked the U.S.O. information desk. Ned had left me a message that he would not be able to meet with me. I was very disappointed that I did not get to visit with Ned.

This is a picture of my cousin, Capt. Ned Elder, from my personal collection. I am not sure where or when this was taken—maybe just before he was shipped overseas—but I believe his wife Betty took the picture.

Lou and I went back to Brightens' Norfolk Hotel. We enjoyed our trip there in November 1943. The last afternoon there we went over to an Ice Skating Rink. I skated and Lou sat in the bleachers. While we were there a couple MP's came into the rink. They were talking to Lou. Lou motioned for me to come over. They informed us that we were off limits here in Brighton to U.S. personnel. They were going to arrest us. I did some fast talking and they let us stay providing we stayed at the hotel and leave in the morning as we had planned. Now we learned why no U.S. personnel were here. We were lucky to have had a nice visit there.

While on leave the "89" was in dry dock having her bottom cleaned and painted. On 19 December 1943, the Old 89 was here at the Plymouth shipyards to have her eight motors replaced with new ones.

On 3 February 1944: One year ago, the old "89" was put into commission. She took us many places with some great experiences. It also was our home for the past year. We celebrated with a turkey dinner Zak prepared.

On 14 February, Zak's replacement arrived. I'll miss Old Zak's round face, large eyes, and smile. James Zachery, C.C.Ste. A good poker player too! He was a good shipmate.

Bob Mc Gowan, GM2c. also was relieved. This helped Wayne Leidy, Seaman 1st class to move up to Gunner Mate Third Class, GM3c.

During our overnight liberties, we would go over to Paignton, South Devon

and stay at the Redcliffe Hotel on the shore of Paignton Bay. We would meet the girls there in the afternoon and have tea in the lobby at the large open fireplace. After dinner, we would go to the cocktail lounge to dance, drink, and visit. It was a great place. It had round blister windows overlooking the bay. The manager treated us well. He said, "Do not get rowdy and make a lot of noise. This is a resident hotel. When you do, I'll kick you blokes out".

He had a bottle of scotch and two gin bottles for us when we stayed overnight. There would be about six or eight of us and the rooms he gave us were all inter-connected with a door. We would call it the rat race. The scotch was hard to come by. I'm sure he got it from the black market.

One afternoon in the lounge, we had a battle with each other with the soda seltzer bottles, sodium bi-carbonated water under pressure, spraying at each other around the room. The girls took off. The barman got the manager. When he came in we sprayed him. It was fun. The manager had to laugh. He made us clean up the lounge. Thank goodness it was just soda water.

During this period on England's southern coast, we had the usual night air raids and the buzz-bomb attacks here and there. The buzz-bomb carried heavy explosives. I could never get use to them. Kind of like an artillery shell whistling--Whoosh! As long as you could hear them you were O.K. When the motor stopped, you'd take a tight grip on you're a--hole and hold you breath. You knew it was going to hit close by. You'd feel the concussion before the explosion.

The months we were in England, we enjoyed our leaves and liberty, but it had a false feeling. We knew what the task was before us. The English ports along the southern channel coast were packed with ships and boats of virtually every kind. There were the floating breakwaters and piers, "Whales," to be sunk in place for docks to build the harbor out from the beach. You could just feel that the time for the invasion was drawing closer by the day. The vehicles, equipment, and ammunition were moving into these ports and loaded aboard the ships.

Admiral John Wilkes, U.S.N. Commander of the amphibious forces under his command did outstanding work getting the force ready. The percentage of readiness of his ships for the operation was 99.5% out of 2,491 ships under his jurisdiction to sail. Behind them were hundreds of other vessels being loaded to carry reinforcement supplies that would be needed after "D" Day landing scheduled through "D" +3.

The Navy's heavy fire support group was assembled in Northern Ireland, waiting for the precise time of rendezvous with the attack forces U and O. These

U.S.S. LCI (L) 89

-*-

SOUVENIR MENU

of

THANKSGIVING

25 Nov., 1943

We are thankful for what we have and the bit we have accomplished this year.

POTAGE
Consomme Julienne

HORS d'OEUVRES
Hearts of Lettuce — Cucumbers Vinegrette
Native Celery — Sliced Bermuda Onions

ENTREE
Braised Loin Chops of Jersey Pork
Gravy d'Espagne — Apple Sauce

LEGUME
Pea Beans ala Chief Louie

POMME
Candied Georgia Yams

PATISSERIE
Pumpkin Pie — Devils' Food Cake
Ala Mode
Fresh Jonathan Apples

DRINK
Coffee — Tea

Get Rid of the enemy and back in U.S.A. for Thanksgiving Day in 1944-Our Goal

Jules Fassy, Cook Steward
Edward Thompson, Ship's Cook
Wallace King, Mess Cook
Leroy Bass, Mess Attendant

Wilburn D. Hilton, Commissary Off.

* En Port: PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND.

* From this port our forefathers, the Pilgrims, sailed. Three hundred and twenty-three years ago they landed in Plymouth, Mass.. They called their "invasion point" Plymouth because the rock where they landed looked much like the one they left from in England. It is with great pride that we celebrate our Thanksgiving Day, 1943 in Plymouth, England.

From water color by Lieutenant Dwight Shepler USNR

Rehearsal at Slapton Sands

Two LSTs loading in the River Dart

Preparations

A stray pup came aboard the 89 at Falmouth, UK. After having some chow he decided to sign on as the crew's mascot, and we named him Blackout.

We had a ceremony to welcome him to the crew; he even appears in one of the official crew photos, in Lieut. Piper's hands.

Wearing a life jacket made by one of his Coast Guard pals, Blackout is prepared for a dunking. Serving on an LCI, Blackout has hit three European invasion beaches.

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, SEPTEMBER 17, 1944

Blackout, seen here in a life jacket I made for him, was with us on the 89 through our action at Omaha Beach, but service on a ship wasn't all he had hoped for (and all the salty water was affecting his hide), so he was reassigned to a platoon of Army soldiers at a temporary air strip in France. He was happy to be back on solid ground! (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

LCI(L)85 and LCT-624 rehearsing invasions in the spring of 1944, probably at or near Slapton Sands, UK. (U.S. Army photograph)

assembly port areas were widely scattered with various types of vessels for the attack forces. The schedules were arranged so that these vessels, due to their speed from these ports, would arrive off the invasion beaches at the same time.

Our training forces, sizes small and large, up and down England's southern coast, kept the Germans guessing as to when, where, and the size of the invasion. General Omar Bradly wrote, "The Cover Plan involved a monumental scheme of deception. It had been built around known enemy agents, phony radio nets, and mock-up invasion fleets. Its object was to delude the enemy into believing that we had collected a full scale army group on the east coast of England for a main channel assault through Pas-de-Calais. Dummy headquarters for this fictitious assault was to be General George Patton First U.S. Army Group."

I thought it interesting that the Coast Guard manned LST's and LCI's which took part in the Sicilian and Italian invasion landings were participating in the Normandy Landing. These numbered 97 vessels, not counting the landing craft carried by our attack transports, *Bayfield*, *Dickman*, *Chase*, and the 60 Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla's 83 footer boats.

1 June 1944 all of England began to swarm with soldiers in battle uniform with their armor moved by the cover of night, converging on embarkation ports along the southern coast.

On 3 June American amphibious forces were in their assigned embarkation ports and harbors along the south coast from Portsmouth to Falmouth, with the famous old seaport Plymouth in the center, where Sir Frances Drake had embarked to fight the Spanish Armada. The Pilgrims also sailed for America on the Mayflower from this port. The soldiers started to embark aboard their assigned ships. We knew it was now under way; the Greatest Amphibious Force was in motion.

CHAPTER 10

D - DAY “OMAHA BEACH”

Quietly the “89" slipped off her mooring lines at 1730-5 June 1944, and sailed out of Waymouths’ Harbor Bay, wind whistling through the mast rigging, into the English channel as the waves washed over her bow. We joined the convoy. There was a low misty overcast sky, northwest wind raising a nasty sea. Waves 8 to 10 feet washing over the deck broke the silence of the night. It made the eighty nautical miles across the channel a long voyage and an arduous night for the sea sick soldiers having been aboard since Sunday.

I went on bridge watch at 2400, the 6th, as we sailed through the blackness of the night, occasionally displaying the moon along with a great armada of ships--our flotilla astern, the cruisers in the marked mine-swept channel. The famous little 83 foot wooden CG cutters flanked our columns. The big transports steamed in one long line in the other swept channel. The convoy was escorted by destroyers. The slower ships were several hours ahead of us. We kept a sharp lookout for German “E” boats.

Coming off watch 0400, I climbed down the ladder to the main deck feeling the chilly cold wind with the waves’ spoondrift sweeping on my face. The wind felt as if it had dropped and the seas were about 4 to 6 ft high. A few soldiers had come up on deck to get some fresh air, standing in the bulwark talking. I went below to lie down. The crew was not sleeping, just looking at each other, not talking. As I lay there my mind was on our landing in a few hours with this wind and high sea surf. This would be a first for us, landing in the daylight and facing enemy fire.

Restless, I got up 0515, put on my impregnated clothing and went topside to the bridge. We had reached the transport anchorage area about ten miles off the beach. The flotilla was sailing slowly in a wide circle, waiting for our time to head for the beach Easy Red. The eastern sky started to light up the horizon. Through the gray morning mist I could see ships everywhere. Aboard we had the Fighting First Army (Big Red One) 16th regiment 29th Division Combat Engineers to land H+65 minutes.

At 0545 a drone of bombers was heard; B-17’s, B-24’s, 329 of them flying

LCI's at dock in England prior to Operation Overlord.
(U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944 ! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned ! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory !

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory !

Good Luck ! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

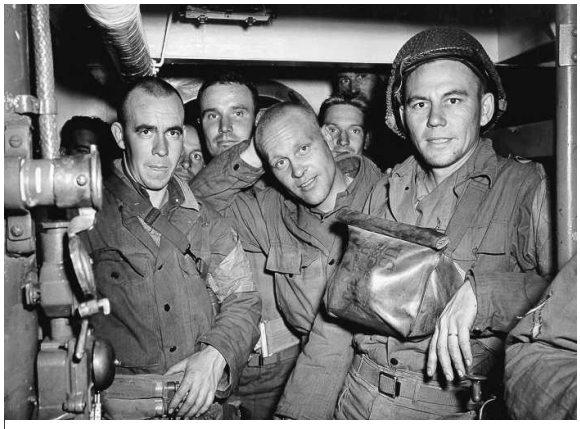
Dwight D. Eisenhower

My copy of the letter we all received from General Eisenhower just prior to the start of Operation Overlord.

overhead through the light clouds. They blackened the sky, an overwhelming sight. Their bombs' flashes illuminated the horizon. As they flew on 0555 the pre-landing bombardment started pounding the beach area. On Omaha's eastern flank the battleship *Arkansas* fired her 14 inch guns at the beaches battery on the high cliff at Pointe de La Percee, along with cruisers and destroyers for beachhead Force 0-1 Easy Green, Easy Red, Fox Green, and Fox Red near Colleville. On Omaha's western flank the battleship *Texas* trained her 14 inch guns on the cliff Pointe de Hoc batteries with cruisers and destroyers for beach heads Force 0-2 Charlie (Rangers at Pointe de Hoc), Dog Green, Dog White (cousin Ned Elder Co. C DD tanks) and Dog Red near Vierville. We watched the salvos flying, hitting into the beach area, pillows of smoke pluming up. Sometimes flames would shoot up. We would feel the force-concussion, hear the resounding blast.

The firing stopped just before the first wave was to hit the beach, minus-D 10 (0620 H), 10 minutes with the DD Sherman tanks.

D-Day H hour. 0630 dawns with gray shadows lifted, the momentous day was underway. The LCVP's and LCT's were about to hit the beach. Our 10 LCI's in Force Omaha-1 (O-1) had already formed up in two columns heading for the beach standing at GQ. As I gazed towards the beach and both flanks of sea surface, I was amazed at the vast array the landing craft presented. As we passed a column of LST's they were rolling in, the waves splashing against their hulls. The sea conditions were not healthy for the assault craft.



Officer and sergeants in the companionway aboard LCI(L)89 on the crossing to Normandy. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph.)

On the 120 foot cliff with Pointe de La Percee before us, overlooking our beach area, were enemy strong points with machine gun and mortar pillboxes. The destroyer *Thompson* was laying about 2000 yards off the beach firing rounds into the cliff trying to take the sting out of these batteries before the landings.

By 0700 our daylight stage was playing out before our eyes. It was high drama to witness what was happening: Gunfire hitting all over the water, the obstacles sticking out of the water, mines exploding as the boats hit them-- dreadnought spectacle! A log jam of boats lay ahead of us. All hands were now at their beaching station in readiness to lower the ramp. The swish of a large shell could be heard passing by us. We were very tense now and scared.

The Navy Beachmaster was signaling all control vessels to suspend their landing. We pulled back some distance away from the shelling. The tide was rushing in fast. A 22 foot high tide was expected today.

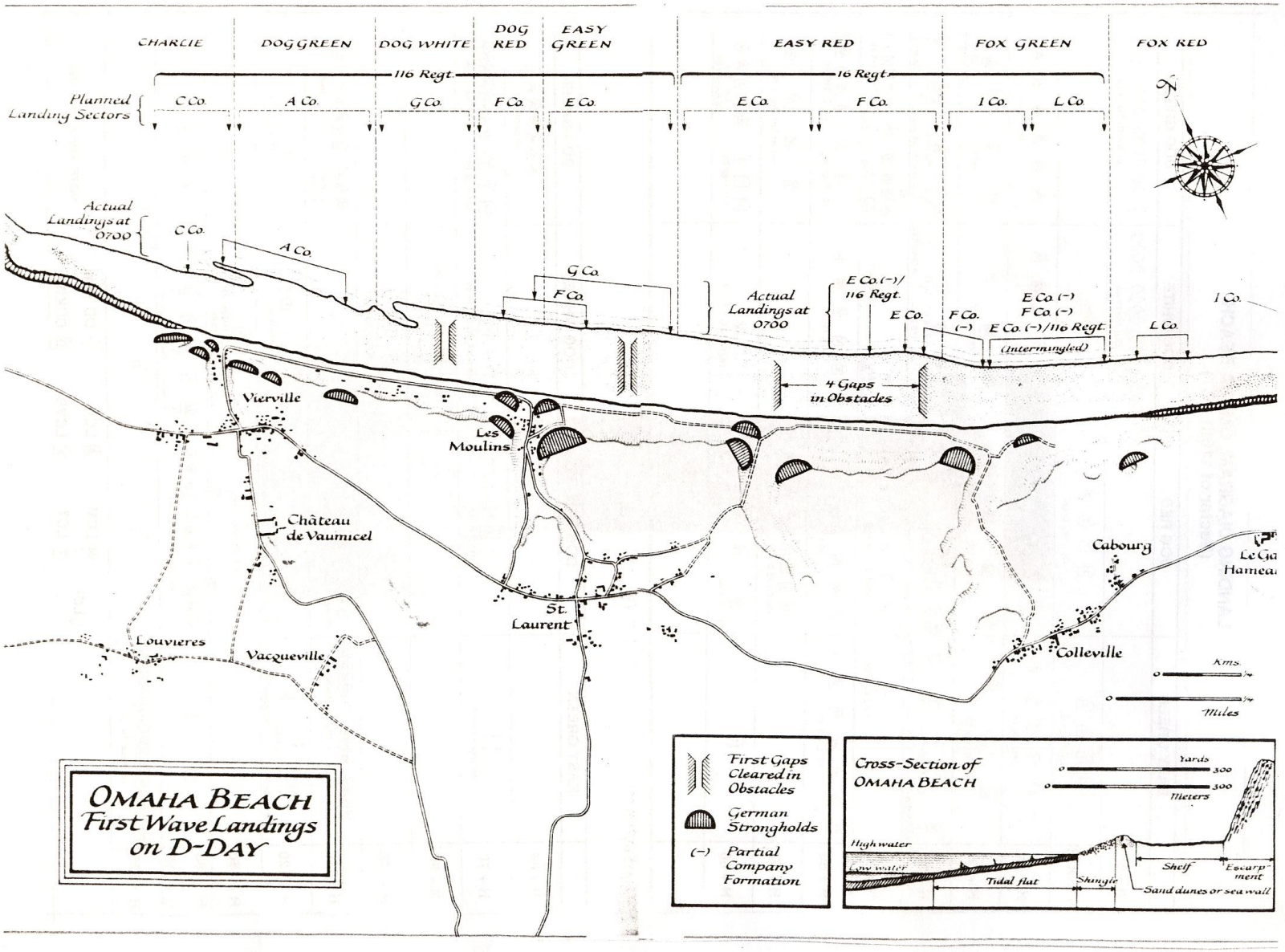
Our wave was now broken up and the landing times disrupted. A little past 0800 some of the LCI's started in on Easy Green, the west flank of Easy Red. As the 91 approached the beach it hit a mine. Flames and heavy smoke shot up. The 92 followed suit, hitting a mine and fire erupting. On our approach, about 0830, nearing the beach, we could hear the hull scrapping over the obstacles and taking machine gun fire, then taking an 88mm shell hit. Captain had the situation under control by backing off and going into our second phase, raising the bunting flag signal for the transport *Chase's* LCVP boats as they were returning from the beach to come along side to unload our troops. The rising tide helped these smaller boats to get through the obstacles. The 88mm hit penetrated several bulkheads, injuring six soldiers, including two officers. In the interim the 85 and 93 were lost to the mines. We lost four LCI's out of our ten of Force O-1.

The LCVP's started to come along side to pick up the soldiers. We helped the soldiers with their gear on getting into the boats. I was helping a soldier, when THUMP! a bullet hit him in the right shoulder. A sniper hit his target. I never got my hands off him, just pulled him back on deck.

The wind had turned the ship along with the tide carrying us into the beach. The Captain saw what was happening and started to turn the ship. The other LCVP's were starting to come in on the other side which was in the lee of the gun fire. As I went to the port side to direct them to the other side, I came under machine gun fire. Running aft, turning at the deckhouse, I slipped from the blood on the deck, sliding into the aft gun tub with bullets hitting the side of the tub. I still hear the ring of those bullets.

As we finished loading the soldiers into the boats, the last boat pulled away, but it didn't go more than 200 yards before it hit a mine and erupting skyward, splintering the boat with shredded bodies on top of the 20 foot water spout. It was all over in seconds. We went over to pick up survivors. There were none. Later the *Chase* reported six of her boats failed to return; they had become casualties of gun fire, mines, or swamping.

The combat demolition group was to clear channels 50 feet wide through the obstacles, and mark the channels for the landing crafts. Due to the high surf and fierce gunfire they were killed or drowned, unable to complete the mission. This


CHARLIE
DOG GREEN
DOG WHITE
DOG RED
EASY GREEN
EASY RED
FOX GREEN
FOX RED
116 Regt.
16 Regt.
Planned Landing Sectors
C Co.
A Co.
G Co.
F Co.
E Co.
E Co.
F Co.
I Co.
L Co.
Actual Landings at 0700
C Co.
A Co.
G Co.
F Co.
Actual Landings at 0700
E Co. (–)/ 116 Regt.
E Co.
F Co. (–)
E Co. (–)
F Co. (–)
E Co. (–)/116 Regt.
(Intermingled)
I Co.
L Co.
4 Gaps in Obstacles
Vierville
Les Moulins
Château de Vaumicel
St. Laurent
Louvieres
Vacqueville
Caboury
Colleville
Kms.
Miles
OMAHA BEACH
First Wave Landings
on D-DAY
First Gaps Cleared in Obstacles
German Strongholds
(–) Partial Company Formation
Cross-Section of OMAHA BEACH
Yards
Meters
High water
Low water
Tidal flat
Shingle
Shelf
Escarp-ment
Sand dunes or sea wall

LANDING DIAGRAM, OMAHA BEACH
(Sector of 116th RCT)

	EASY GREEN	DOG RED	DOG WHITE	DOG GREEN
H – 5			◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ Co C (DD) 743 Tk Bn	◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ ◇◇◇◇ Co B (DD) 743 Tk Bn
H HOUR	T T T T Co A 743 Tk Bn	T T T T Co A 743 Tk Bn		
H + 01	V V V V V V Co E 116 Inf	V V V V V V Co F 116 Inf	V V V V V V Co G 116 Inf	A A A A A A Co A 116 Inf
H + 03	M M M 146 Engr CT	M M M M 146 Engr CT — Demolitions Control Boat	M M M 146 Engr CT	M M M A A 146 Engr CT — Co C 2d Ranger Bn
H + 30	V V V V V AAAW Btry — Co H HQ Co E Co H — 116 Inf — AAAW Btry	HQ V V V V V HQ V V V V HQ Co V V V 2d Bn Co H Co F Co H 2d Bn AAAW Btry 116 Inf	V V V V V AAAW Btry — Co H HQ Co G Co H — 116 Inf — AAAW Btry	A A A A A A A A A V Co B HQ Co A Co B — 116 Inf — AAAW Btry
H + 40	M 112 Engr Bn	V V V V M Co D 81 Cml Wpns Bn — 112 Engr 149 Engr Beach Bn	V M 149 Engr Beach Bn — 121 Engr Bn	HQ A A A A M V V V V V V 1st Bn 116 149 Beach Bn 121 Engr — Co D 116 Inf
H + 50	V V V V V V V Co L 116 Inf	V V V V V V V Co I 116 Inf	V V V V V V Co K 116 Inf	M V V V V V V V 121 Engr Bn — Co C 116 Inf
H + 57		V V V V V V V V V HQ Co 3d Bn — Co M 116 Inf		V V V V Co B 81 Cml Wpns Bn
H + 60	T	V T T T T 112 Engr Bn	V HQ & HQ Co 116 Inf	T T T A A A A A 121 Engr Bn — Co A & B 2d Ranger Bn

	EASY GREEN	DOG RED	DOG WHITE	DOG GREEN
H + 65				A A A A A A A A 5th Ranger Bn
H + 70	I 149 Engr Beach Bn	I 112 Engr Bn	I Alt HQ & HQ Co 116 Inf	M T T A A A A A A A A 121 Engr Bn — 5th Ranger Bn
H + 90			T T T T T 58 FA Bn Armd	
H + 100			I 6th Engr Sp Brig	
H + 110	D D D D D D D D D D D D 111 FA Bn (3 Btrys in DUKWS)	D D D D D D D AT Plat 2d Bn — AT Plat 3d Bn — 29 Sig Bn		D D D D D D D D D D AT Plat 1st Bn — Gn Co 116 Inf
H + 120	T T T 467 AAAW Bn — AT Co 116 Inf — 467 AAAW Bn	T T T T T T AT Co 116 Inf — 467 AAAW Bn — 149 Engr Beach Bn	T T 467 AAAW Bn	T T 467 AAAW Bn
H + 150		DD Tanks T T T	I HQ Co 116 Inf 104 Med Bn	
H + 180 to H + 215	T T	D D D D D D D D D D D D 461 Amphibious Truck Co	M T M T M T Navy Salvage	T T T T T
H + 225	D D D D D D D D D D D D D D D D 461 Amph Trk Co	T	T T	

I LCI M LCM A LCA ◇ DD Tank
T LCT V LCVP D DUKW

NOTE: Plan as of 11 May

created the confusion: Boats could not get in, the timing was off, and boats landing at different locations. The obstructions consisted of rows of pyramids of heavy steel, timber poles, concrete structures, and hedgehogs, many topped with teller mines.

We took our injured soldiers and some survivors we had picked up to the transport *Chase*, now acting as a hospital ship.

Returning to the beach and acting as traffic control vessels, two destroyers, *Emmons* and *Doyle*, steamed in close to the beach. I was sure they would go aground. They were shooting at targets of opportunity with their 5" guns, shooting at the enemy batteries on the cliff, literally was blowing the top of the cliff apart. The Destroyer Thompson joined them firing at the beach batteries. The Destroyer fire afforded the troops the only artillery fire support they had.

By 1200 the soldiers that were huddled at the bottom of the Cliff's beach were starting to move off the beach inland. The momentum increased as the obstacles cleared for landing craft channels. The LCT's were landing troops with their equipment vehicles. The tide was running out, carrying the debris of soldiers' packs and other pieces of floating items, along with bodies and body parts rolling with the waves. The rescue boats were busy picking up the bodies. It was a site you'd never forget. The heavy naval and air bombardment did little damage to the German oppositions here. Fighting was fierce and deadly, the most destructive and damaging in the entire invasion. Casualties were heavy and heroism great this day.

In one instance with the Destroyer *Emmons*, a spotter sent word that the Germans were spotting from the Colleville Church tower. They wanted it knocked down without hurting the rest of the eleventh century church. It was a little too fine an order for the *Emmons*. However, her 12th shot was a near miss as to shake the tower and the 13th shot clipped it off. Part fell in the churchyard and parts crashed into the nave. (Samuel Eliot Morison's book "The Invasion of France Volume XI pp 146) She also silenced a concealed mortar battery that been sending murderous fire on the beach all morning. These destroyers played a large part in opening the beach area for the troops.

By afternoon the situation stabilized: the soldiers huddled at the bottom of the cliff, protected from enemy fire, and started to move out, while other troops flowed in un-challenged with their equipment. The Air Force was flying their sorties overhead, both fighter and bombing support missions. The Navy's heavy

guns gave the army artillery support inland. Enemy artillery fire continued to fall upon Omaha beach. There would be an intermittent enemy shell hitting the water around the invasion fleet area with no damage. No Luftwaffe planes showed up.

That night, however, the Luftwaffe showed up, with several JU 88's dropping bombs and mines in our anchorage area. Two of the planes were shot down. We were at GQ and the ack-ack shell fragments were dropping all around us from the Navy's and transport's guns. Off in the distance, we would hear the Navy's heavy gunfire seeing their shell explosions, red flashes inland. Neither surface E-Boats nor U-boat attacks were made in our sector D-Day night. The Utah sector area was about 20 miles to the west of our area and the British sector was 30 miles to our east. The Coast Guard had manned ships with these attack forces.

Now let's talk about the 64 DD tanks and the flotilla's 4 LCI's lost in the early morning hours at Omaha beach.

Let me explain first what happened to the 64 DD tanks, then our flotilla's 4 LCI's lost that morning on Omaha. I never knew the full story about them until I started my research for this book.

The high surf on the beach with the high tide rushing in took its toll early that morning. The plan was to launch the DD tanks, 64 of them, early morning and ten minutes before H hour 0630, from the LCT's about two miles to 4000 yards from the beach. The books I researched had different distances. They would then propel themselves by a propeller attached at the rear of the tank, to the beach. The 16th Regiment 741 tank battalion 32 DD's were assigned to Easy Red and Fox Green beach area. The LCT's reaching their drop distance lowered their ramps launching the tanks. They were weird-looking amphibious vehicles with their bloomer canvas skirts that were to support them in the water and/or float them.

The heavy morning surf waves collapsed the canvas bloomers around the tank, flooding them as they plumped into the deep water, one after another. The tragedy took 29 of the battalion's tanks. The other 4 tanks had the good fortune that the LCT's ramp jammed and later were put ashore. So the 16th Infantry lost their fire support on our beach area.

My cousin, Captain Ned Elder, with his C Company 743 DD Sherman tank battalion just west of our Easy Red beach, consisting of 16 tanks to be launched from four LCT's ran straight for the beach. We will quote from Stephen Ambrose's book D Day: June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II, pages 272, 273, and 274:

"Lieutenant Rockwell, off Dog White and Dog Green, made his own decision. He got on a tank radio, despite orders not to use the radio, to call Captain

The photographs on this page and the next were taken by a Coast Guard photographer aboard the 89 the morning of the D-Day invasion. He developed the pictures below deck, and gave me prints that he would have otherwise discarded.

A view of part of the forces involved in history's greatest amphibious assault.

LSTs that made up part of the invasion forces.

On the bridge of LCI(L) 89. Hand signals and other communications methods were used due to radio silence.

An LCVP shows scars where the boat was hit by enemy machine gun fire at Omaha Beach.

A DUKW heads for shore.

After Omaha Beach was secured.

Elder of the 743rd Tank Battalion in a nearby LCT. Rockwell was prepared to argue, as he assumed Elder would want to follow orders. (With regard to using the radio, Rockwell later said, "At this stage of the game I was willing to take a chance, because it was necessary to get on with the invasion, is what it amounted to.")

To Rockwell's relief, Elder agreed with him. "I don't think we can make it," he said. "Can you take us right in?"

That was exactly what Rockwell wanted to hear. Using flags and Morse code, he ordered the seven other skippers of his LCT flotilla to keep their ramps up and drive into the beach. As they approached, the eager tank crews opened fire against the bluff, shooting over the bow.

Rockwell's flotilla went in line abreast. On LCT 607, the skipper failed to act. Ens. Sam Grundfast, second in command (who had been a Boy Scout and could read the Morse code faster than his signalman), put it bluntly: "He froze. So the signalman looked at me, I looked at him, and I then took over the command of the boat. I gave the signal that we were obeying the order to go ashore."

As LCT 607 drove in, it hit a mine. "It literally blew us sky high. The skipper was killed. All the men were killed except two and myself. The four tanks were lost and all of the Navy personnel. I wound up in a hospital for several months, requiring extensive surgery."

Seaman Martin Waarvick was on Rockwell's boat, LCT 535. "I was at my post in the forward port locker room near the bow, warming up the small Briggs & Stratton engine that we used to lower the ramp," Timing was now critical. If that ramp dropped too soon, the water would be too deep; if it dropped too late, the tanks would not be able to do the job and the 116th Infantry would not have the help of the tanks at the moment the infantry most needed it.

The noise was deafening. The battleships and cruisers were shooting over the LCTs from behind. On each side of the lane reserved for the landing craft, the destroyers were banging away. Aircraft engines droned overhead. As Rockwell got close, the LCT(R)s let loose. On his LCT, the tank crews started up their engines.

Speaking was impossible, thinking nearly so. Further, the smoke obscured Rockwell's landmarks. But a shift of wind rolled back the smoke for a moment and Rockwell saw he was being set to the east by the tide. He changed course to starboard and increased speed; the other skippers saw this move and did the same. At the moment the naval barrage lifted, Rockwell's little group was exactly opposite Dog White and Dog Green, the tanks firing furiously.

This was the moment Rockwell had been preparing for over the past two years. This was the reason LCTs existed. But to Rockwell's amazement, what he

had anticipated was not happening. He had always assumed the enemy would be firing at his LCT as it came in, but so far, no German gun had done so.

At 0629 Rockwell gave the signal to Waarvick, who dropped the ramp. LCT 535 was the first ship of the first wave to launch equipment in the Omaha area. Waarvick remembered that the tanks "started out down the ramp, clanking and grinding. They sure made a racket on that steel deck." They were in about three feet of water.

The first tank lurched forward, dipped its nose to the slope, crawled ahead through the breakers to the sand fifty yards away, the water washing over its back and pouring off again. It began firing–and at that instant, so did the Germans. An 88mm gun was enfilading the beach from an emplacement to the right. Rockwell watched as 88 shells hit three of the landing craft on his right in quick succession. He expected the next shell to hit his LCT, which was lying still and broadside to the gun–a can't-miss target– when the last of his tanks went into the water. As it cleared the ramp, Waarvick raised it. The German gunners turned their fire from the LCTs onto the tanks.

And then, Rockwell recalled, "We pulled that famous naval maneuver, known through naval history as getting the hell out of there." He used his anchor to retract; he had dropped it going in, it had a separate engine to winch off, and it worked.

As Rockwell backed off, the tanks he had been responsible enough and courageous enough to put on the beach were blasting away with their 75mm cannon and .50-caliber machine guns. As LCT 535 retracted, Higgins boats carrying the 116th Regiment began moving in. It was 0630 at Omaha Beach, H-Hour."

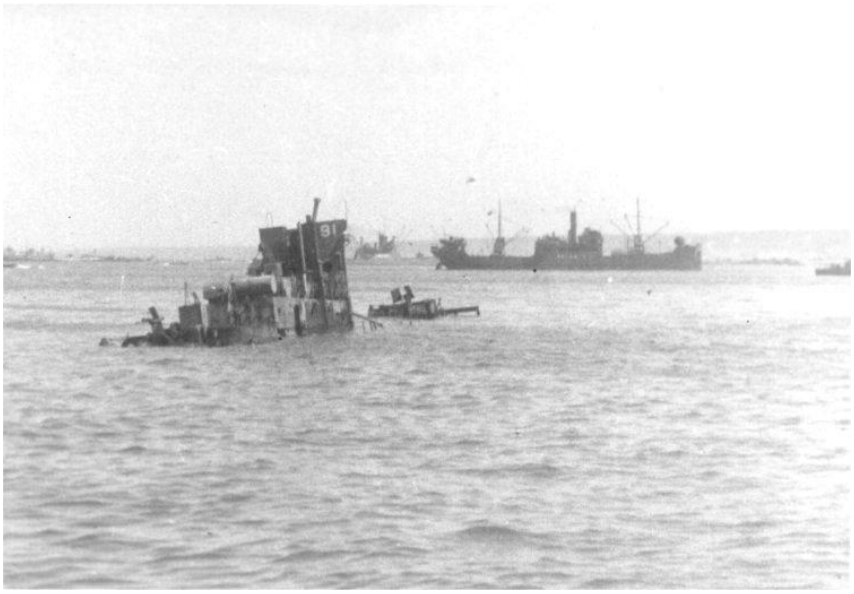
According to Ned's records at Fort Knox Historic Patton Museum in Kentucky, his decision played an important role in gaining a foothold on the beach at Les Moulins. He directed the fire of his company tanks against enemy pill boxes and strong points along Dog White's high bluffs of the beach. For his action on the beach he was awarded the Distinguish Service Cross and Purple Heart.

He continued to lead his tank company night and day from the 6th of June until his death in action leading his company against a strong enemy counterattack between St. Jean de Daye and St. Lo 11 July 1944.

Lieutenant Dean Rockwell USNR oral history about Ned Elder and the DD Tanks has been a great contribution to the D-Day history. Other books that noted the DD Tanks instance are The Fighting First by Flint Whitlook, The Invasion of France and Germany by Samuel Eliot Morison, and The Longest Day by Cornelius

LCI(L)s 91 and 92 on the crossing from England to Normandy. Both ships were lost to enemy mines and artillery at Omaha Beach. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

The 85 after she had been fatally hit, tied up to the Samuel Chase. Dead and wounded can be seen on the deck. She sank soon after.
(U.S. Coast Guard photograph)



LCI(L)91 partially submerged after the D-Day invasion. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

LST's unloading after the initial invasion at Normandy. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

Ryan

A note on the Coast Guard-manned LST's, LCI's and transports that took part in the Mediterranean Sea placidity invasions that were participating here at Normandy. Their number was 97 vessels, not counting the landing craft carried by the Coast Guard Transports. The four LCI's lost here at Normandy were the flotilla's first and attached to our Task Force 0-1 here at Omaha in the midst of the hottest fighting in the Normandy invasion.

The LCI 85 hit a mine while going into the beach as she careened through a jumble of defense obstacles, landed on the beach disembarking the soldiers. In the process a shell blew off the port ramp. It killed 15 men and wounded 40, setting off a fire in the forward compartment. Despite this she slowly started taking water, retracted from the beach and returned to the transport area. There she went along side C.G. Transport Chase unloaded her wounded and dead, then backed away. A salvage tug went along side to determine if she could be saved. She started settling by the bow capsizing. The salvage tug boat crew then sank her by a demolition charge.

As the LCI 91 approached Omaha Fox Red beach she passed through a maze of pole obstacles. She beached and began to disembark the soldiers in face of heavy machine gun fire. The surf and incoming tide moved her forward that the pole obstacles blocked further progress. She retracted off the beach and re-beached hitting a pole teller mine that exploded on her port bow, killing several men. It tore a two foot hole in the bow above the water line. As she was unloading the remaining soldiers, she was hit by several 88 mm shells, a violent explosion erupted in the forward compartment, followed by a blast of flames that enveloped the bulwark deck. The flames were out of control. Men jumped into the water. The ship was abandoned. All troops in the forward compartment were killed. Seven of its crew perished and 11 were wounded. The ship burned all morning.

When the LCI 92 went into the same beach seeing the 91 burst into flames, the Captain piloted his ship to the lee of the burning 91 hoping to use the black smoke from its fire to screen his landing. As the 92 cleared the outer obstacles, a terrific explosion on her port side rocked the ship. The mine started a fire and sprayed the forward deck with burning oil. The crew battled the flames. Almost simultaneously a shell exploded aboard while the disembarking soldiers were being cut down with heavy machine gun fire. Soldiers in the forward compartment were killed. After all were off an attempt was made to retract; but the fire became intense and out of control. The order was given to abandon ship. Fortunately, there were no crew casualties, eleven were injured. The two LCI's served as landmark that day for incoming crafts and German artillery spotters.

Down the beach the LCI 93 landed. Her troops encountered little enemy action in landing her troops. She made a second trip later that day on a rapidly falling tide, passed over a sand bar, grounded and started to debark her soldiers. With about 25 soldiers still on board, the enemy found its target and several batteries concentrated on her. One soldier was killed and four seriously wounded. The crew suffered five shrapnel casualties and two seriously injured. After all of her troops were ashore, she retracted but was grounded firmly on the bar. She received ten direct hits. Small boats came along side to evacuate the wounded and the crew. The 93 was so badly holed that no further attempts was made to save her.

The LCI 83 was halted because of the obstacles. A LCVP boat came along side and succeeded in getting 36 soldiers off. Then a shell hit into the bulwark, killing three soldiers and wounding thirteen. An hour later another LCVP took off 36 more troops. This process being too slow, the Captain decided to try beaching again. During the landing a mine exploded up through the forward compartment causing extensive damage and injuring several men; but all troops succeeded in getting ashore except the wounded. The crew carried the casualties to the beach turning them over to the medics.

While the crew waited for the tide to go out they planned on how they could save the ship. When the 83 was high and dry, the crew did the damage control work. The demolition crew cleared away the obstacles astern of the ship. To lighten the bow load equipment was disposed of over the side and the excess fuel pumped overboard.

As the tide came in with the pumps operating the ship floated. The Captain backed off the beach and requested permission to return to England; but could not contact the proper authority. The next day permission was granted. The 83 returned to Weymouth, England, under escort. She was later put back in service.

All of our LCI's in our group Force 0-1 took fire by either 75mm or 88mm and machine gun, such as LCI 89 with injuries. The damage was such that it did not impair their operating ability to be dispatched as required working as fire fighters, salvage work and ferrying troops from transports into required beachhead. The 89 took over traffic control for the landing crafts, mostly LCT's and LST's. We were kept busy until darkness set in, then returned to the transport area for aircraft cover for the transports.

CHAPTER 11

OMAHA BEACH OPERATION D+1 to D+40

1. Omaha Beach's Harbor:

D+1-7, June the beach was littered with wreckage from the preceding day's heavy fighting, along with enemy intermittent artillery shells falling all morning. The Army tried to clear the beach of casualties, equipment, and obstacles to facilitate landing troops, equipment and supplies. Unloading fell behind schedule. Captain Wright USN and Captain Imlay USCG had the almost impossible job of sorting out what ships were present at anchorage and what was arriving to meet the armies' demands. Under pressure for supplies, the LST's were beached at high tide to be unloaded, called "Drying Out." This was tried and found to be practical.

While this was going on we became the traffic control vessel for the beach supplies. The navy sent several LCVP boats with crew to our ship to be dispatched as pilot vessels, guiding cargo craft to the beach and ships to the anchorage area to be unloaded. Our other LCI's served as fire fighting ready ships, salvage ships, towing cargo barges to and from the beach along with other logistical duties. We lay at anchor about two miles off the beach with the LCVP boats. I had the crew cleaning up a troop compartment, remove some bunks and set up a table and benches for the LCVP crews to use.

The incoming ship traffic was heavy keeping the LCVP boats busy. Everybody was busy from daylight to darkness; here and there an occasional German artillery shell would hit the water. Very little damage was done. Daylight and darkness, high and low tide, the barges and LST's were being beached unloaded and removed. After midnight we encountered another small air raid with no damage.

By D+2 we began to feel confident that things were going well with the army inland. The momentum on the beach started to pick up looking more like an ant hill; Troops disembarking with their equipment and vehicles going off the beach in a steady line from the landing crafts, up the hill road.

The "Mulberry" units started to arrive and were spotted at the buoy markers

the surveyors placed the day before. The "Mulberry" was an artificial seaport with pre-built fabricated sections that could be towed across the channel, made to be quickly installed, in place, to be in operation immediately. The units were given names under condition of the most excruciating secrecy. The sea breakwaters sheltered water for the harbor were called "gooseberries," consisting of ancient ships called "corncobs" and were sunk parallel to the shore line in about three fathoms (18ft) of water.

The "Phoenics," the two sides of the artificial harbor breakwater were concrete casings with crew quarters and AA guns. These were five stories high, large enough to accommodate seven Liberty ships plus several smaller ships, forming about a 2 square mile area of harbor. They were built in different sizes to accommodate the water depth. They looked like Noah's Ark.

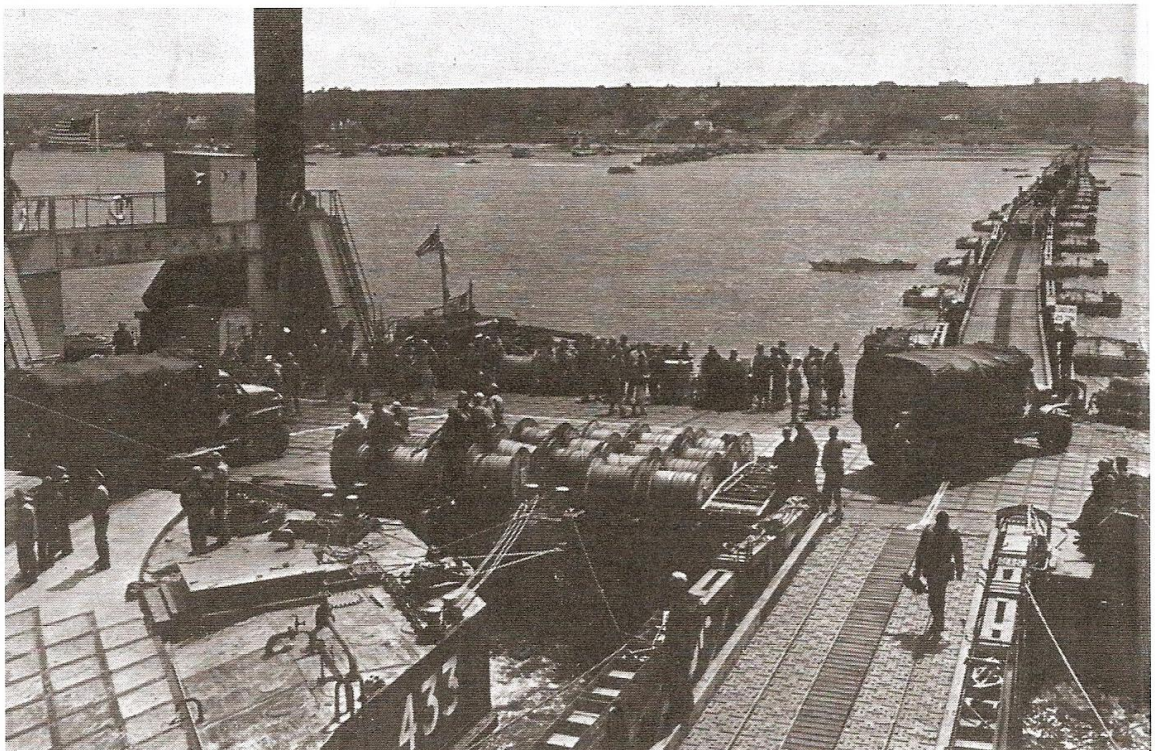
The pier heads, "Lobritz," named after the man who designed them, were able to rise and fall with the tide. The "Whale" pontoon sections were anchored with 80 foot long flexibly connected steel roadway from the pier head to the beach. There were three roadways to the beach.

It took 132 sea tugboats to tow these prefabricated units across the channel. The Royal Navy's Royal Engineers, U.S. Navy, and Seabees erected the harbor units. By D+12 days the supplies handled before the storm, consisted of 197,444 troops, 27,340 vehicles, and 68,799 long tons of supplies handled through the Omaha fabricated port. These were the most active in northern France, with great capacity.

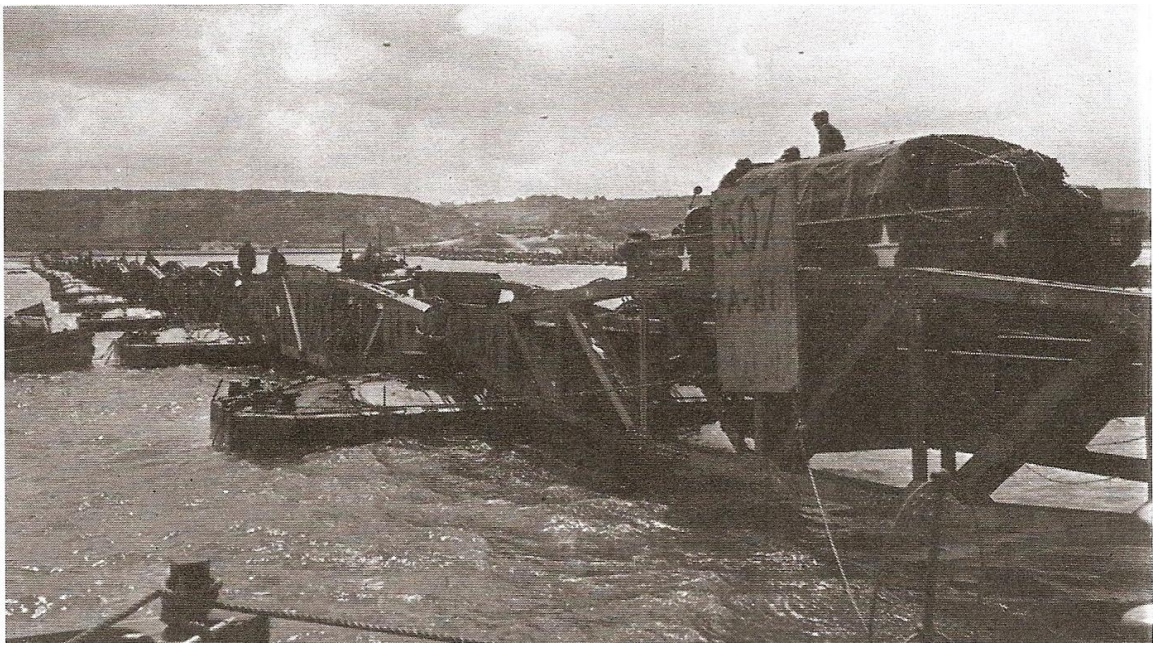
Another British project, "Pluto," abbreviation for a small flexible pipeline to be laid under the channel waters, would supply the troops with the vast quantities of the petroleum products they required. It was laid from a ship steaming at five plus knots. It was feared that E-boats and U-boats would concentrate on the tanker ships that were in short supply for the invasion. The word "Buco," referred to a built up control organization after D-Days initial assault, for troop reinforcements to be ferried promptly across the channel at disembark action points with supplies and equipment. This immense follow-up was required to overwhelm the Germans before they could mass a counter attack into all the beachheads.

This was a tremendous, fantastic, unbelievable project, greedy with manpower which caught the Germans off balance, along with nature's storm. The Germans knew the Allies would need harbors in order to supply their content invasion build-up calculated the minimal they could bring in over the beaches. They felt safe, but astonished and beaten. When it was too late our well-planned delivery was faster than they had anticipated.

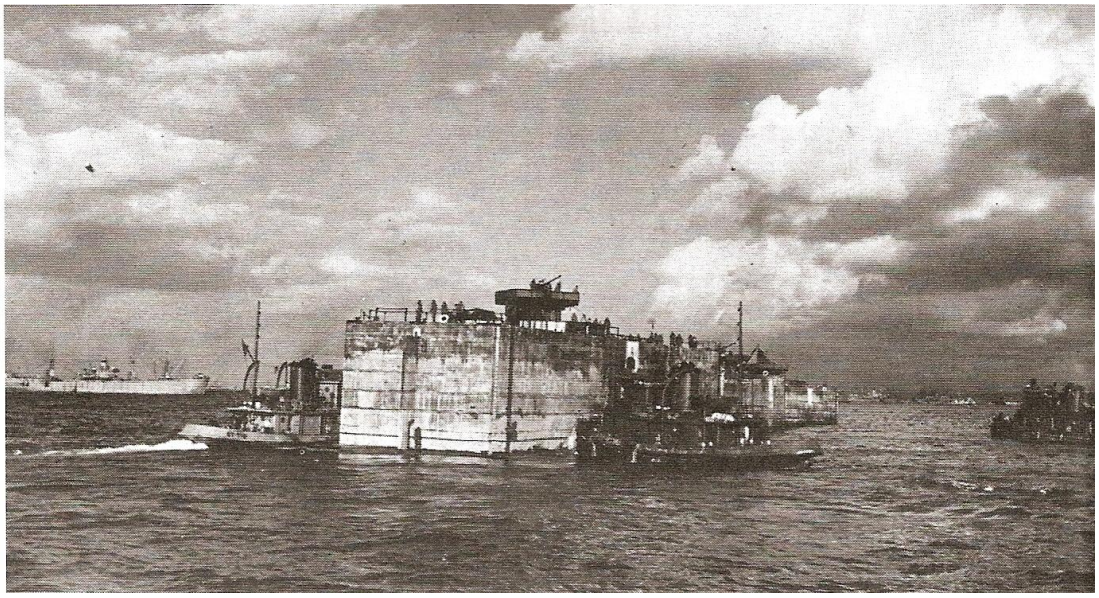
Arromanches and its artificial harbor, code name Mulberry, on the right flank of Gold Beach, in a photograph taken in September 1944. There was a similar artificial harbor off Omaha Beach, but it was destroyed by a gale between June 19 and 22. (U.S. Navy photograph)



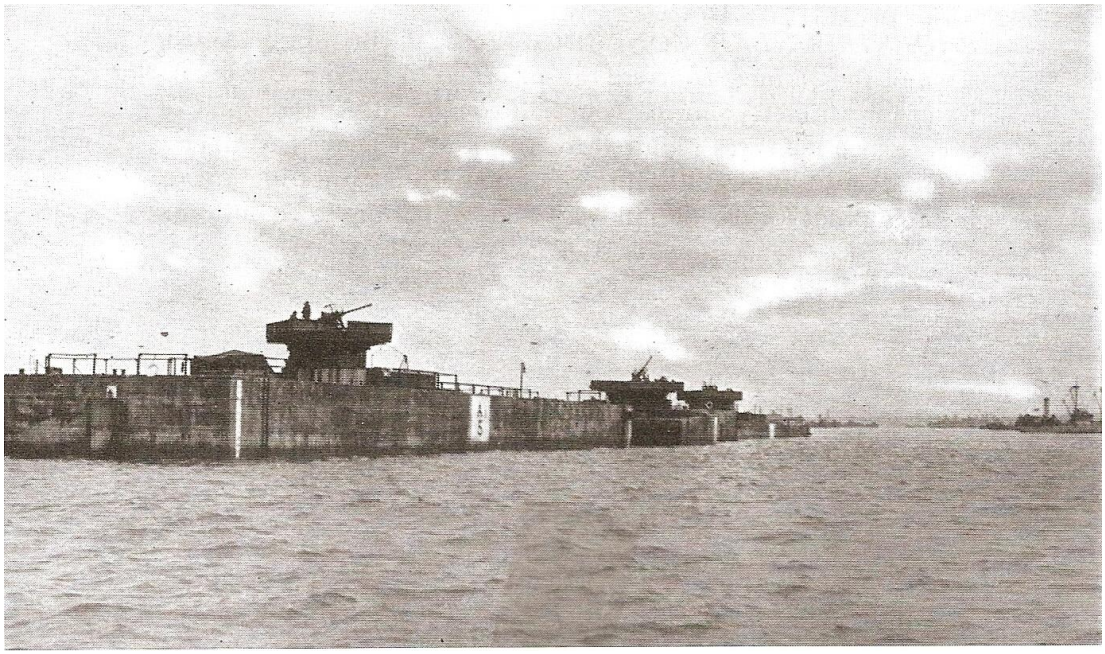
The first vehicles roll ashore over a floating Whale roadway, carrying supplies and ammunition for the Army. (U.S. Navy photograph)



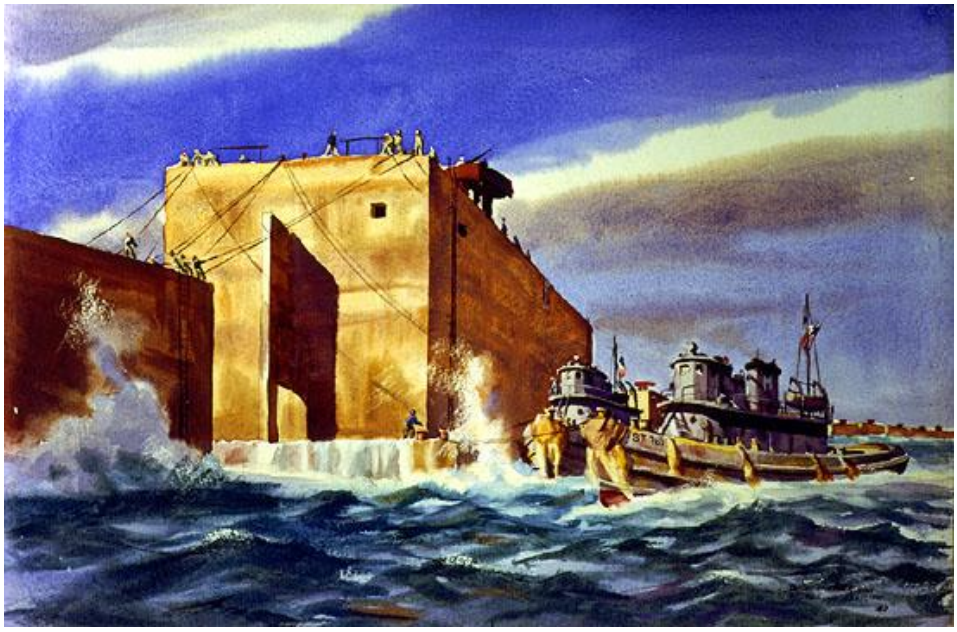
This steel bridging, supported by pontoons, can carry a 40 ton load. The number on the sign board identifies the section as a B1 type, belonging in plan 507 for Mulberry A. The designations helped to sort the sections for assembly after being towed from England to Omaha Beach. (U.S. Navy photograph)



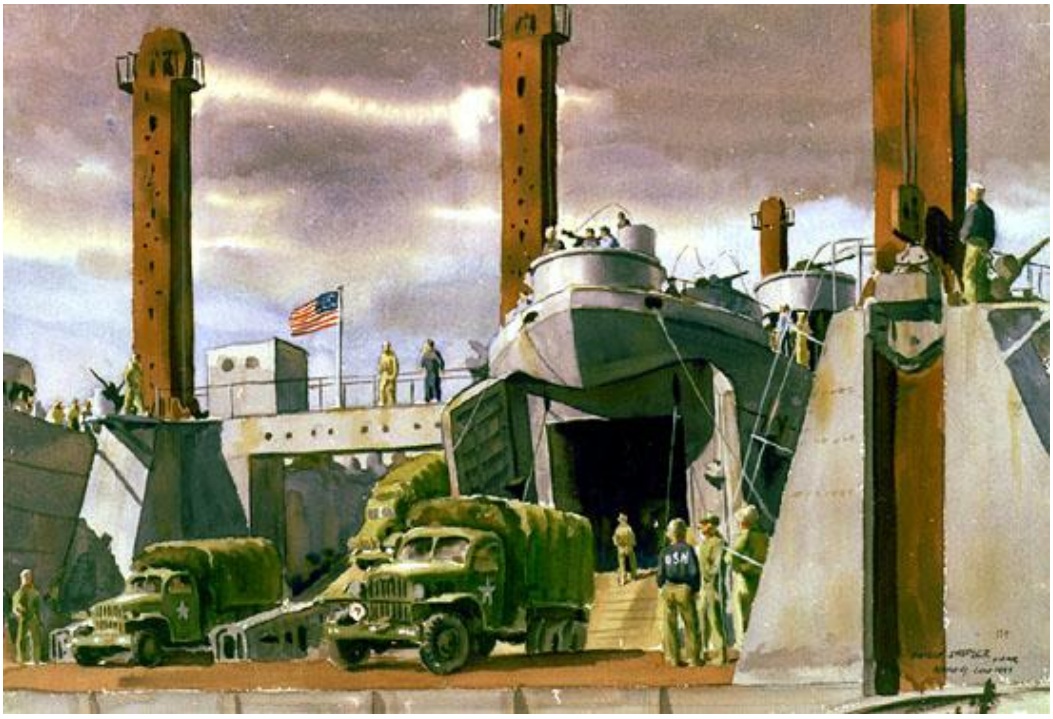
A Phoenix Caisson is sunk to form a breakwater off Omaha Beach. U.S. Army ST Tugs are positioning the caisson as it is in its last stages of settling. (U.S. Navy photograph)



Caissons sunk butt-to-butt for this Phoenix breakwater line. The gun platforms on the top provided additional anti-aircraft protection. (U.S. Navy photograph)

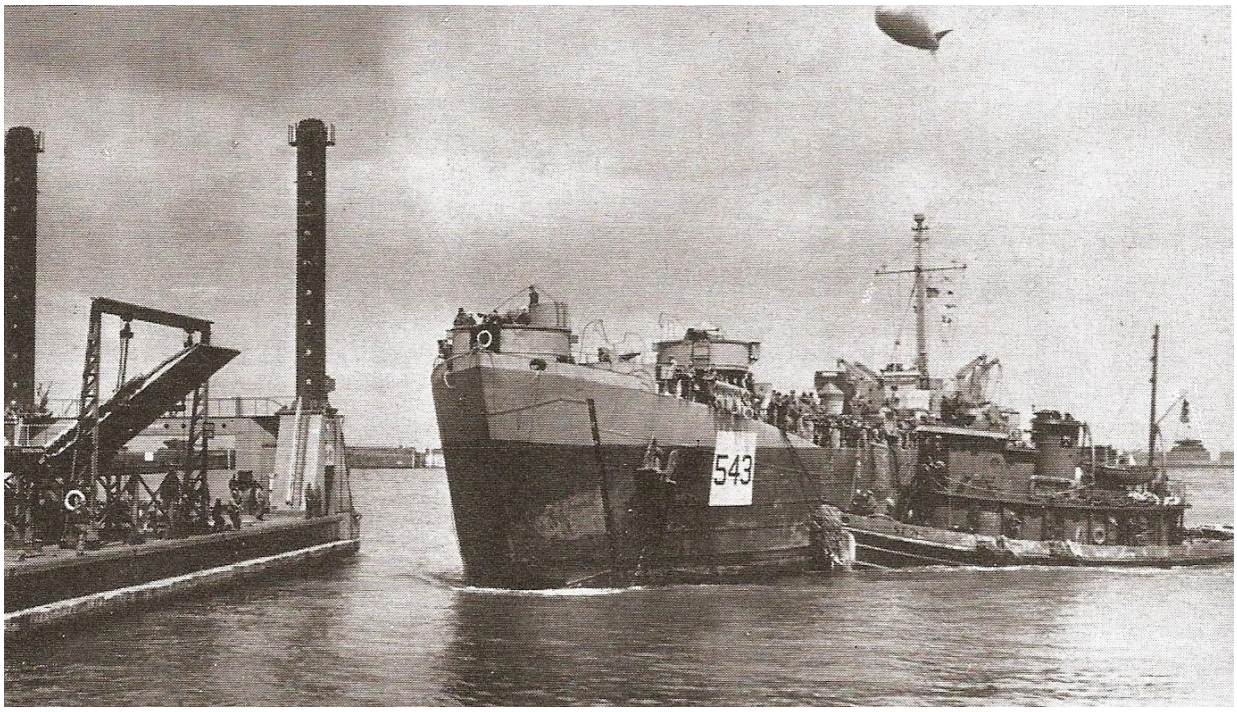


An official U.S. Navy painting of a Mulberry harbor being transported across the English Channel. (U.S. Navy archives.)

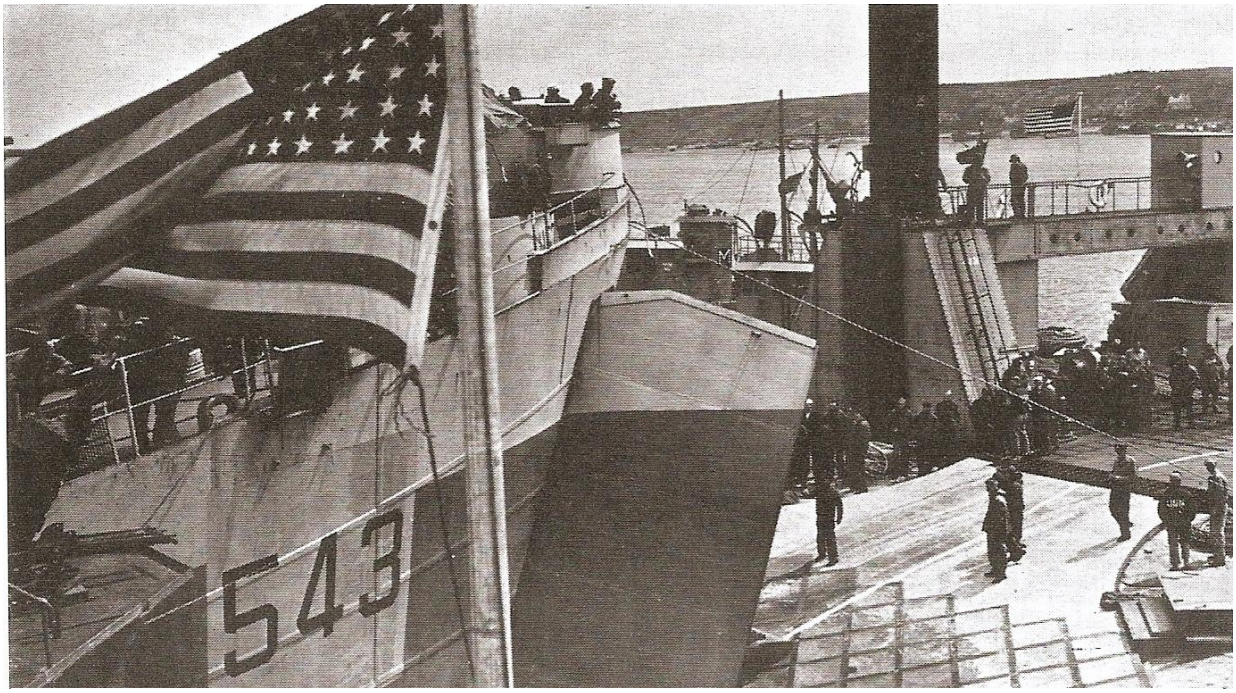


An official U.S. Navy painting of a Mulberry in action. (U.S. Navy archives.)

Gooseberry breakwater off Omaha Beach, formed by a line of sunken ships. Note the landing craft inside the sheltered area. (U.S. Navy photograph)



A tug guides the first LST to arrive at Lobnitz Pierhead. The LST will ground her bow on the inclined pier in the foreground, and open her bow doors to allow the vehicles to drive onto the pier. An upper deck unloading ramp will be lowered to allow vehicles and personnel on the upper deck to be discharged at the same time. (U.S. Navy photograph)



The LST is ready to discharge vehicles up the floating ramp, onto the pierhead, then across the floating Whale roadway to shore. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Praise and gratitude was earned by the men who assumed the heavy task of spotting the units where they were needed and those who delivered on schedule. They made the "Mulberry" Seaports come about ten days after D-Day in full operation, a historic story in itself. A complete model of the original "Mulberry" was presented to President Roosevelt by Prime Minister Churchill, displayed now in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, N.Y.

The invasion of Normandy differed from every other amphibious operation. The Mediterranean and Pacific islands assault forces were relatively small, over water operations to their objective. The supplies, operation personnel with maintenance arrived later. Troops were only committed in the assault. At Normandy, the beachheads were bridgeheads backed for the assault, with combat troops planned for building up Allied forces faster than the Germans could counter attack with reserves. One and one-half divisions were assembled in Britain to be moved across the channel with their supplies, equipment and vehicles with immediate follow-up in itself. This was a major operation for the first three days.

D+2 - 8 June 0045 a bombing raid by the Luftwaffe made it hot for the landing craft, especially the ammo barges needed by the Army, up on the beach at high tide. It was imperative that they land at high water. By 0200 the landing craft were able to land the barges. The day was busy landing troops and supplies. The Navy was still giving the troops artillery support upon their request calls. They were firing their 12 and 14 inch shells inland as far as 8 to 10 miles. All in all, the area was busy. Supplies and troops were still behind schedule. Our pilot boats were busy with incoming ships.

D+3 – 0030, another air raid. This was becoming a nightly event, bomb and mine sowing. The aviation engineers had the emergency landing strip completed. It was a 3500 foot earth runway suitable for transport planes to land and also emergency landing for the fighters planes. The next day they had six Thunderbolt fighters on the field. Later in the day the C-47 transports were landing to evacuate the wounded. Also, a number of Piper Cubs recognizance planes were using the field.

The demolition crews sank 13 "Corncobs," the gooseberry ships for the outer breakwater for the Mulberry harbor. That was something to watch! The explosion sounded and the ships settling very quickly to the bottom, staying in their spotted position.

The next day the Captain moved the “89" alongside one of the sunken ships. We all climbed aboard the ship to explore it. Before our tour was over we helped ourselves to the clean sheets and towels left on board. We had fresh linen. The tour created a little excitement with the crew. The crew did not have much to do. The ship standing as traffic control vessel was also standing watch. The officers were the busy ones.

In the afternoon a German recognizance plane dropped in through the clouds for a look at the harbor. He had a warm welcome.

D+5 - 0100 we had a large air raid and another at 0400 with strafing on the beach. Numerous planes were shot down. That afternoon I went ashore, hitching a ride with a coxswain aboard his Higgins boat. As I arrived on the beach I was amazed by the contrast between D-Day’s debris and shell-damaged, burned-out wreckage, and the now-clean beach and busy port of entry. As I walked up the hill road off the beach to the plateau field above the beach, there was a prisoner camp and the air field.

There was heavy truck traffic on the road and transports landing and taking off. I just poked around looking at the destroyed pillboxes and shell holes. I went over to the air strip, talked to some of the evacuation nurses and looked over the Thunderbolt fighters. The few buildings in the area were demolished. The Army was getting set up nicely. I might mention from daylight to darkness off in the distance we would see large flights of bombers flying inland and returning. Our area had friendly fighter squadrons protecting the skies above. They were doing a good job. We had no air raids through the day.

D+9 - 15 June 2200 big air raid. The bombs were dropping very close to us here inside the Mulberry harbor. At 0300, another air raid. I’m praying that we don’t become a casualty. The mines were the greatest concern. They were the oyster mines, a pressure or sonic type with a delayed action. These mines had been taking there toll on our ships. The destroyer escort *Rich* came to assist the Destroyer *Glennon*, and her stern was hit by one of these mines. As the *Rich* slowly rounded the *Glennon’s* stern, she took a mine hit. Three minutes later a second hit and then the third mine exploded under midship. She sank within 15 minutes. Of her crew of 215, 52 were missing with over 100 wounded. The *Glennon*, salvaged, was towed to an England harbor. The Luftwaffe flew 1683 sorties the first week over operation “Neptune,” along the Normandy coast.

As we lay at anchor 17 June D+11, that afternoon about 1500, I was down in the troop compartment visiting with some of the LCVP's crew, when there was an explosion that rocked the "89". We all ran up the ladder to topside. Just off our starboard side about 70 yards, the freighter ship *Empor Brodsord* took a mine hit. The crew was running on her deck, smoke and steam erupted from midship. The coxswain and their crew jumped into their boats, rushed over to the ship and took off crew and personnel. As they pulled away, the ship sunk. None of the engineer crew in the engine room survived.

Minesweepers were busy on 7 June. They detonated 30 mines near the boat lanes coming into the beach area. The sweeper TIDE herself became a victim of a mine. Minesweepers worked continually sweeping the areas off the beach and expanding the mid-channel shipping lanes. By 3 July a total of 261 mines were swept up in the American area and 291 in the British.

2. Big Storm:

D+12. That evening, 18 June, the northeast wind started to blow bringing in a cold heavy rain. By midnight, the winds increased to 15 to 20 knots gusting up to 25 to 30 knots. The seas started to kick up. A nasty night at sea. The northeast wind blew directly on the beach. As the morning progressed, so did the short wave sweeps. The pounding wave action and high winds began to push our ship, dragging our anchor.

General Quarters sounded! The Captain wanted to arouse the crew on the double. The engines were started. Retracting our anchor, we steamed out to the Goosberry's Sea breakwater and reset the anchor. It started to drag. The Captain ordered us to get the stern anchor and rig it to be used with the bow anchor. I had the crew rig the extra steel cable with an eye through the anchor's U-bolt, securing the end with four U-shackles with a steel grommet between the cable and the anchor's U-bolt. I had the word passed up to the Captain that the anchor was ready. The other anchor was retracted and set. Then the rigged stern anchor was set to the right of the other anchor about 30 feet, forming a V with the anchor. The anchors held.

We were anchored now, with some protection from the Goosberry breakwater, breaking the pulling wave action. While we were busy re-anchoring, there was a great commotion going on out there in the pitch black hole with other ships and landing crafts, also dragging anchor. You could hear the confusion sound resonating over the high wind. As the dawn appeared we could see the landing craft tangling up and hitting each other, adrift. They were churning around and being driven ashore, piling into each other on the beach. Some of the unmanageable boats

and barges drifted into the Mulberry pontoon bridgeway, creating a big problem. All work had to be stopped. The floating bridgeways were being pushed off their moorings. This condition went on all day long, destroying the Mulberry artificial harbor. The soft sandy bottom anchors would not hold with the short pulling wave action on the anchor rode.

The storm went on till 22 June. This was an extremely strong, long storm with high gusting winds and cold sheeting rain. It was listed as one of nature's worst June storms in the 40 years on record.

We managed to stay anchored until the afternoon of 20 June. The one anchor cable gave way due to the cable stretching fatigued, the cable strands. The ship drifted to starboard on the other cable. It held for about an hour and it let go. Now we had no anchors. Captain Fabian asked me if I could get out our mooring lines to tie off on one of the sunken breakwater ships.

"Captain, these lines are old and will part rather quickly."

"We do not have a choice."

"Captain, I remember seeing a long towing pennate on the sunken ship we were on the other day. If we could locate it and get the pennate to tie off on that ship it could hold us."

The Captain thought for a minute.

"Let's take a look at the ship and see if it is possible to do it".

We sailed along the Goosberry ships and found the ship we felt was the one we were tied up to and boarded. I climbed up the ladder to the fly bridge where the Captain, Mr. Howard, and Mr. Piper were on the bridge. We looked over the possibility of boarding the ship--a dangerous condition with the waves braking over her deck. Her freeboard was higher than most of the other ships. Her deck house structure was midship. This could give us some protection from the breaking waves coming over her. It looked feasible if we could get aboard. The Captain was concerned about our safety getting aboard.

I felt confident we could get aboard the ship. The Captain was an experienced seaman. He probably was the most experienced and the oldest in our flotilla. Prior to the war, he sailed his three-masted schooner sailboat as a charter sailing cruise to and from San Francisco to the Hawaiian Islands.

The Captain wanted to just use spring lines, fore and aft, to hold the "89" along side the sunken ship so we would float free with the wind holding off the ship. I had Karner with a couple of seaman to handle the lines and stand by them should the Captain need to brake away quickly. Chief Lauve and his crew, Copland, Cox, and Maurer were handling the motor winch in the forecastle to winch in the pennate. I took my gun crew Herring and Liedy with me. We worked well together.

The twisted wreckage of the Whale roadway to shore. Drifting landing craft had crashed into it during the storm. (U.S. Navy photograph)

This picture at low tide after the storm shows some of the barges and landing craft that piled up against the Whale roadway. (U.S. Navy photograph)

A huge storm wave breaks over the deck of the old *Centurion*, the outer ship at the end of the Gooseberry breakwater. (U.S. Navy photograph)

That's me and Mr. Howard (with his back to the camera), in this picture taken during the storm. We were looking for the sunken ship with a towing pennate I had noticed previously, to tie-up the 89 and ride out the storm. (U.S. Coast Guard photograph)

The Executive, Mr. Howard in the bulwarks would coordinate us in getting the pennate into the bow forecastle.

It looked ferocious with the braking waves coming over the sunken ship. The foaming water was rushing off the deck. The wind carrying the feather spray off the wave as the Captain brought the “89" alongside. As we closed in close enough for Herring, Liedy and me, we hopped over the sunken ship railing. The seaman threw us the spring lines. We made the eyes fast on the bollard’s heads.

We went looking for the pennate. Sure enough! It was there where I had noticed it. I gave the Captain the thumbs up sign. We found the pennate. The pennate was heavy, about 3 inches in diameter, 150 to 200 feet long. We tugged to get it over to the other side of the ship. We could have used another hand. It was hard to see. The water was hitting our face, dripping off, and gushing around ankle deep or more. Karner threw me the 1 inch line to pull the pennate into the forecastle. I put the bitter end through the scupper and tied a bowland through the open link. I signaled Mr. Howard to winch it in. We made several loops around the bollards heads and fastened the swivel end. Then we played the slack over the side as Chief Lauve winched the pennate in. Both ends secured, the Captain pulled ahead on the aft spring line bringing the “89" over to the ship. I threw the bow line off and we jumped aboard the “89.” The Captain signaled Karner to cut the line loose. Captain backed down turning the stern out from the ship then letting the “89" drift free from the sunken ship. As she drifted picking up the pennate slack, it popped up out of the water jolting us, almost knocking us off our feet. She settled into the wind at about a 75 degree angle off the sunken ship as if she was at anchor. The crew cheered.

The Captain came down on deck smiling and congratulated us.

“A job well done. Let’s pray the pennate will hold us.”

As it would stretch you could feel the wave surge tug on the steel towing pennate.

After chow that evening, the guys got into their bunks. The surge tug would settle them down, sliding down in the bunk. Then they would have to pull themselves back up from time to time. They laughed about it; but after two nights it became a nuisance. While the storm was blowing all we could do was read, play cards, and stand our watches. The wind and cold rain made us miserable and you couldn’t do anything topside. There was nothing going on in the artificial harbor. As we looked toward the beach, we could see the strewn landing craft and barge wreckage lying there with the surf’s foaming water splashing over it. The artificial Mulberry harbor was in shambles. Fragment parts here and there. The beach mess exceeded D-Day’s mess. It was hard to believe this could happen after all the work

put into it.

The storm finally blew its self out by the morning of 22 June D+16. The Seabees were busy cleaning the beach and partly restoring what could be salvaged of the port. The Army was hurting due to short supplies. Nothing had been landed for three days. Unloading soon recovered its momentum. The British artificial harbor survived the storm with little damage owing to partial protection by the off-lying Calvados Rocks and by the caps that jutted out into the channel just north of LeHavre.

3. Logistical Duty

Our hold on Normandy's Omaha Beach was precarious until they captured the Cherbourg Major Port. Our transport ships and troop reinforcements were at the mercy of tricky English Channel weather. The four day storm threatened great danger to the supply line to the Army moving inland. This brought their operation to a standstill. Each day, thousands of tons of supplies are required, especially ammunition. Everything was arriving behind schedule. All this helped the enemy to stiffen their defenses. It slowed down the attack on Cherbourg. The supply shortage actively started on Omaha's Easy Red Beach on D-day.

With the artificial harbor destroyed by the storm, the transport ships had to be unloaded by barges towed to the beach at high tide and unloaded when the tide receded. The LST's were "Dry Out," landed at high tide to be unloaded. This process was slow. It took hours to unload. With the harbor, they could be unloaded in one hour. The truck and vehicles were already loaded with crews with them. They were unloaded so fast they were having traffic jambs up on the bluff plateau.

The biggest problem now was to maintain selective control over the ships at anchor and the inbound ships from England, to prevent overstocking of unwanted items. The C-47s flew in for critical ammunition shortages, landing on the temporary landing strip atop the bluff of East Red Beach.

We needed an anchor so we could anchor in the harbor, to handle the pilot work. The Captain sent a detail to the beach to salvage an anchor the size we needed from the wreckage on the beach. They did very well. They salvaged two anchors. I had the seamen busy rigging one so we could anchor. We slipped off the tow pennate leaving it hanging on the sunken ship for future use, if needed. By mid afternoon, we were back at anchor with the LCVP boats and crew, D+16, 22 June. As you would know, the Luftwaffe got busy that night dropping their bombs and

seeding mines.

The harbor area was filled with underwater obstruction, unmarked wrecks and parts of the artificial harbor. The seas were too much for the light crafts with light ground tackle. Even some of the larger vessels dragged anchor and were grounded in the shallow waters. These vessels were salvaged from the sandy sea bottom.

We continued to be the harbor control vessels until 10 July, 18 days with this duty. The crew could go ashore for several hours just to get off the ship to break up the monotony. It was very quiet except for an occasional night air raid. On 2 July, a transport ship hit a mine hit as she was going into the anchoring area about 200 yards from our ship. She sank quickly settling to the bottom. She looked like one of our Mulberry "Corncob" ships with her main deck and superstructure above the water.

On 10 July, D+34, we were relieved from Traffic Command vessel. The next day we set sail for Port Cherbourg to make a survey of the harbor to determine the capacity for transports delivering material, supplies and personnel. As we approached the Cherbourg area, we joined another LCI, Navy-manned, to guide us through the mine swept approach channel into the harbor.

The German demolition had destroyed all port installations in an effort to render it useless. The piers, cranes, marshaling yards, bridges, power stations, transformers and burned down the warehouses were useless. The harbor was strewn with scudded ships and was heavily seeded with mines. Our Salvage Engineers, on the heels of the infantry, went to work clearing the harbor. A total of 133 mines were swept and a score of merchant ships that had been scuttled were removed to clear channels to the docks.

After the June storm, it became imperative that we capture the Cherbourg port as soon as possible. Under the Command of Admiral Deyo, USN, the U.S. Navy and British Navy bombarded the port at 1214 - 25 June. They were met with intense retaliation fire from the shore batteries. Navy reconnaissance planes spotted the directions for our ships' gunfire on Cherbourg. The battle went on through the night into the next day. The Navy also gave the Army artillery support on land side. By 1500 - 26 June they put the German guns out of commission and both Army and Navy Commanders surrendered. Three weeks after D-day landings in Normandy,

Cherbourg was considered one of the great strategic victories of the Contentin Peninsula. The capture of the port became tremendously valuable to our forces. After 21 days, 16 July, the first four Liberty ships had dropped anchor in the harbor. By the end of October, Cherbourg was handling 15,000 long tons per day.

Lt. Commander Quentin R. Walsh, USCG, was awarded the Navy Cross for heroism and bravery in the assault on Cherbourg. Photograph from the U.S. Coast Guard archives.

Lt. Commander Quentin R. Walsh, USCG did the logistic planning at the U.S. Navy Forces office in London, for Port Cherbourg, and then volunteered to lead the 53-man special mission. Walsh received the Navy Cross for heroism and bravery in the assault. The citation for his award noted: “Heroism as Commanding Officer of a U.S. Naval party reconnoitering the naval facilities and naval arsenal at Cherbourg June 26 and 27, 1944. While in command of a reconnaissance party, Commander Walsh entered the port of Cherbourg and penetrated the eastern half of the city, engaging in street fighting with the enemy. He accepted the surrender and disarmed 400 of the enemy force at the naval arsenal and later received unconditional surrender of 350 enemy troops and, at the same time, released 52 captured U.S. Army paratroopers. His determination and devotion to duty were instrumental in the surrender of the last inner fortress of the Arsenal."

After our officers completed their survey, we departed for the England. Arriving at Waymouth Port, 16 July, England looked great to us after our D+43 days tour on the Normandy coast.

CHAPTER 12

BACK TO THE STATES

The next morning I was called to the Wardroom, where I was informed that my replacement had arrived and I would be heading back to the States. As a young man, I was overjoyed to hear I was being sent home! Captain Fabian explained to me that I had a choice: stay aboard and return to the States with the flotilla in the near future, or head back right away. The decision was hard for me. I enjoyed serving under Captain Fabian aboard the 89; she was home, and I would miss my shipmates. The captain said he would like for me to stay aboard, for she was going into the shipyard for repairs and refitting, and my knowledge of the ship would be helpful. But the draw of getting home sooner won out. I thanked the captain for his trust in me, and told him I'd decided to accept my relief and head home right away.

I joined several other Coast Guardsmen being relieved. We were transported to a U.S. Naval base located across the River Clyde from Glasgow, Scotland. The troop transport ship *West Point* lay at anchor in the river. Well all thought she'd be our transportation back to the States, but a couple of days later she weighed anchor and sailed off.

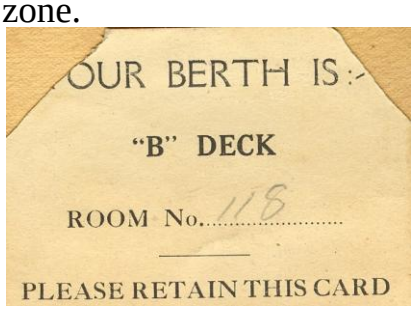
While at the base they had us working unloading cargo and removing debris to the dump to be burned. At the dump I met a Scotsman, Mr. McGregor, who had some young boys with him gathering wood and cardboard to heat their homes. We helped them when we could. One morning Mr. McGregor had a heart attack at the dump. I sent two men to get medical help at the base. A doctor came with the pharmacist mate and took him back to the base for treatment. When he returned to the dump a few days later he thanked us for saving him. He liked my family name, noting that there were many Elders in Scotland. I told him about my great-grandfather Samuel Elder, who worked at the Glasgow shipyards before migrating to the United States.

We started getting anxious to get home again when the *Queen Mary* arrived and anchored in the river, but two days later she, too, left without us. Then the *Queen Elizabeth* arrived—she was the one who'd carry us home! We boarded the next day.

That afternoon, with the river tide current going out, it took the Queen Elizabeth several hours to swing on her anchor to sail to the Atlantic Ocean. We were on our way that evening, and with her speed it took her just three-and-a-half days to bring us to Port New York, U.S.A. It was a much more pleasurable trip

than our 19-day crossing of the Atlantic in April of ’43.

Sailing into New York, passing by the Statue of Liberty, was one of the great thrills of my life. My heart was pounding, and there were tears in my eyes. Words alone cannot express the feelings I had returning home from the European war zone.



My berth assignment card for the Queen Elizabeth.

Coast Guard personnel were waiting for us when the *Queen Elizabeth* tied up at the pier dock. They took us to the Manhattan Beach C.G. Station in Brooklyn for physical examinations and debriefing, then issued us 30-day rehabilitation Liberty Passes.

Instead of telephoning my parents, I boarded a bus to Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, to surprise them. It was a great homecoming! While on leave I also married my girlfriend, Esther V. Garman of Curwensville, Pa.

Upon my return to Manhattan beach Station, I was assigned to the Coast Guard Ninth District in Cleveland, Ohio. From there I moved to the Coast Guard Station at Toledo, Ohio, and in February 1945 I was assigned to the Group Mackinac on Mackinac Island, Michigan, serving as second-in-command of the station. I remained there until my discharge, reserve enlistment, on 13 October, 1945.

My tenure with the United States Coast Guard was a great, romantic adventure. I take great pride in serving our nation during World War II, and in being one of the many who were part of World War II’s Greatest Amphibious Force.

The U.S. Coast Guard station and sailboats at Mackinac Island, Michigan.
(U.S. Coast Guard photographs)

Admiral Ernest King, General George C. Marshall, and aids attending a meeting at the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island, Michigan, in the spring of 1945. They arrived aboard a Navy PBY sea plane. I had the honor to coxswain our long boat to pick them up from the plane and ferry them ashore for their meeting and back. My wife Esther took these two pictures.

In addition to my personal experiences, I drew upon the following monographs for information in this book:

A Soldier's Story
By Omar Bradly, General, U.S. Army

D-Day June 6, 1944
By Stephen E. Ambrose

First Fleet First Edition 1944
By Reg Ingraham
Chapter Five: "The Invaders"

Force Mulberry
By Alfred Stanford, Commander, USNR

The Fighting First
By Flint Whitlock

The Invasion of France and Germany 1944-1945, Volume XI; Operation In North African Waters October 1942 - June 1943, Volume II; and Sicily-Salerno-Anzio January 1943-June 1944, Volume IX
By Samuel Eliot Morison

The Longest Day
By Cornelius Ryan

"They Took Their Harbors With Them" Article, Mechanics Illustrated Magazine January 1945
By Harry Botsford

The U.S. Coast Guard at Normandy
By Scott T. Price

The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II, Revised Edition 1989
By Malcolm F. Willoughby
Chapter Fifteen: "Operation Torch" North Africa
Chapter Sixteen: "Landings in Sicily & Italy"
Chapter Seventeen: "The Normandy Invasion"

"To Omaha and Back" Article, World War II Magazine July 2001
By Gary Hyde

Pictures and Sketches

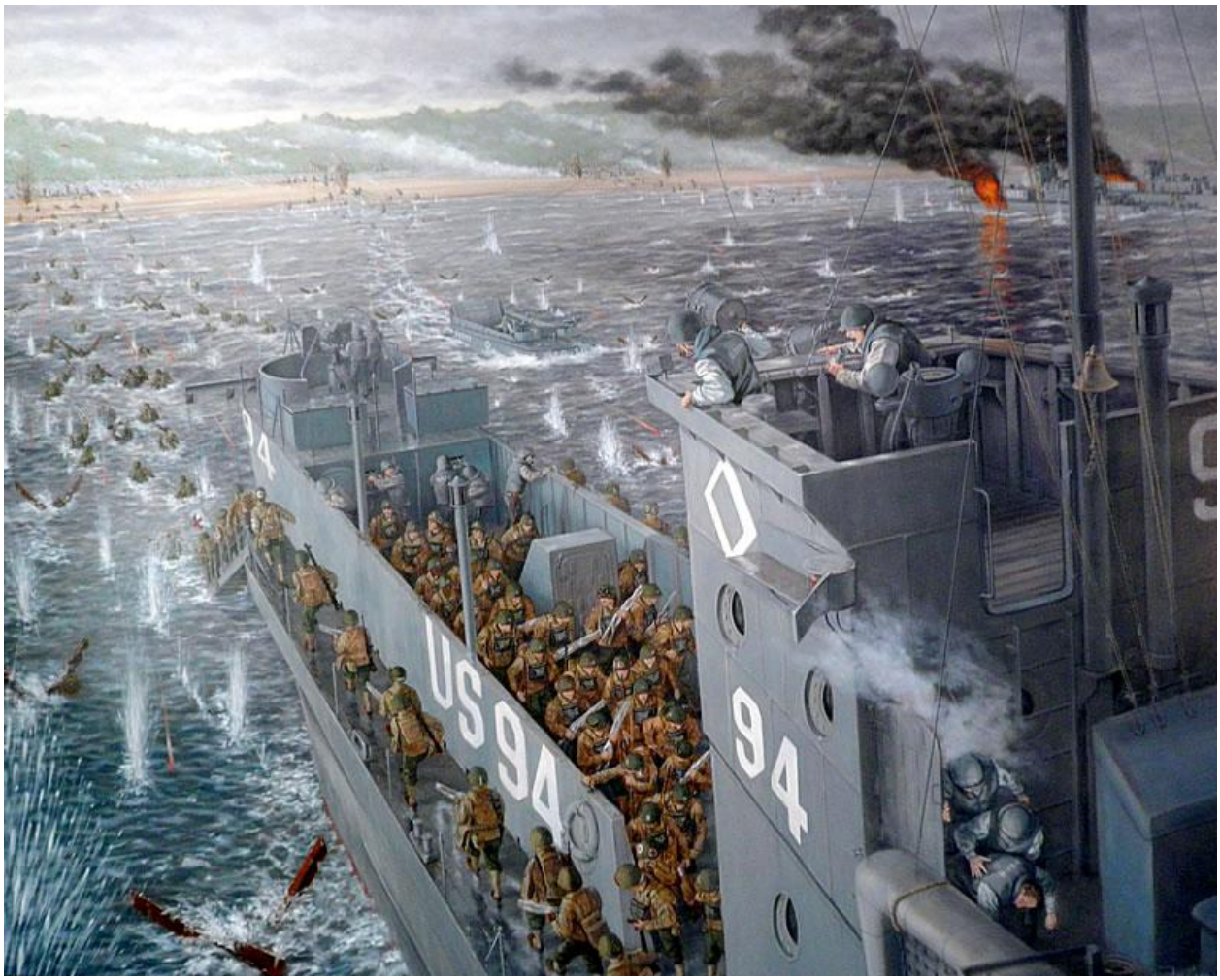
A Soldier's Story *By Omar N. Bradly, General, U.S. Army*	*Pictures pages 236-237*
D-Day June 6, 1944 *By Stephen E. Ambrose*	*Pictures pages 160, 161, 320, 321* *Sketches pages 122, 123, 331. 332*
The Invasion of France and Germany, Volume XI *By Samuel Eliot Morison*	*Pictures pages 68, 69, 100, 101, 132, 141, 148, 149, 172, 173, 204, 205* *Sketches pages 31, 112, 113, 117, 133, 182, 199, Appendix I pages 135-137*
Sicily-Salerno-Anzio, Volume IX *By Samuel Eliot Morison*	*Pictures pages 26, 27, 42, 82, 83, 106, 107, 113, 130, 131, 156, 157, 166, 167, 182* *Sketches pages 62, 63, 76, 77, 114, 115, 133, 134, 153, 162, 163, 188, 189* *Appendix I pages 385-390* *Appendix II pages 391-394*
Force Mulberry *By Alfred Stanford*	*Pictures pages 176, 177*
The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II *By Malcolm Willoughby*	*Pictures pages 208, 209, 213, 240, 241* *Sketches pages 209, 216, 222, 223, 230, 232, 240*

The maps and pictures are from my personal library, and from U.S. Coast Guard archives and other public domain sources.

Wm. D. Elder

On June 5, 2009, William D. Elder and four other U.S. Coast Guard veterans who served on LCI(L)s in the D-Day invasion, were honored at a ceremony unveiling a new mural at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT. The mural painted by artist Tony Falcone, titled "Coast Guard Manned Landing Craft at Normandy, June 6th, 1944," depicts three LCIs from Flotilla 4/10.

Flotilla 4/10 D-Day veterans (L-R) Al Green, Bill Elder, Eugene Sweitch, Paul Mascatelli, and Ray Jennings at the Coast Guard Academy.



"Coast Guard Manned Landing Craft at Normandy, June 6th, 1944"
Original oil painting on linen, 8.5 ft x 10.5 ft
By Tony Falcone
On display at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT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