

Joint Issue of

# ELSIE ITEM

and the

# DECK LOG OF THE USS LCI(L) 713

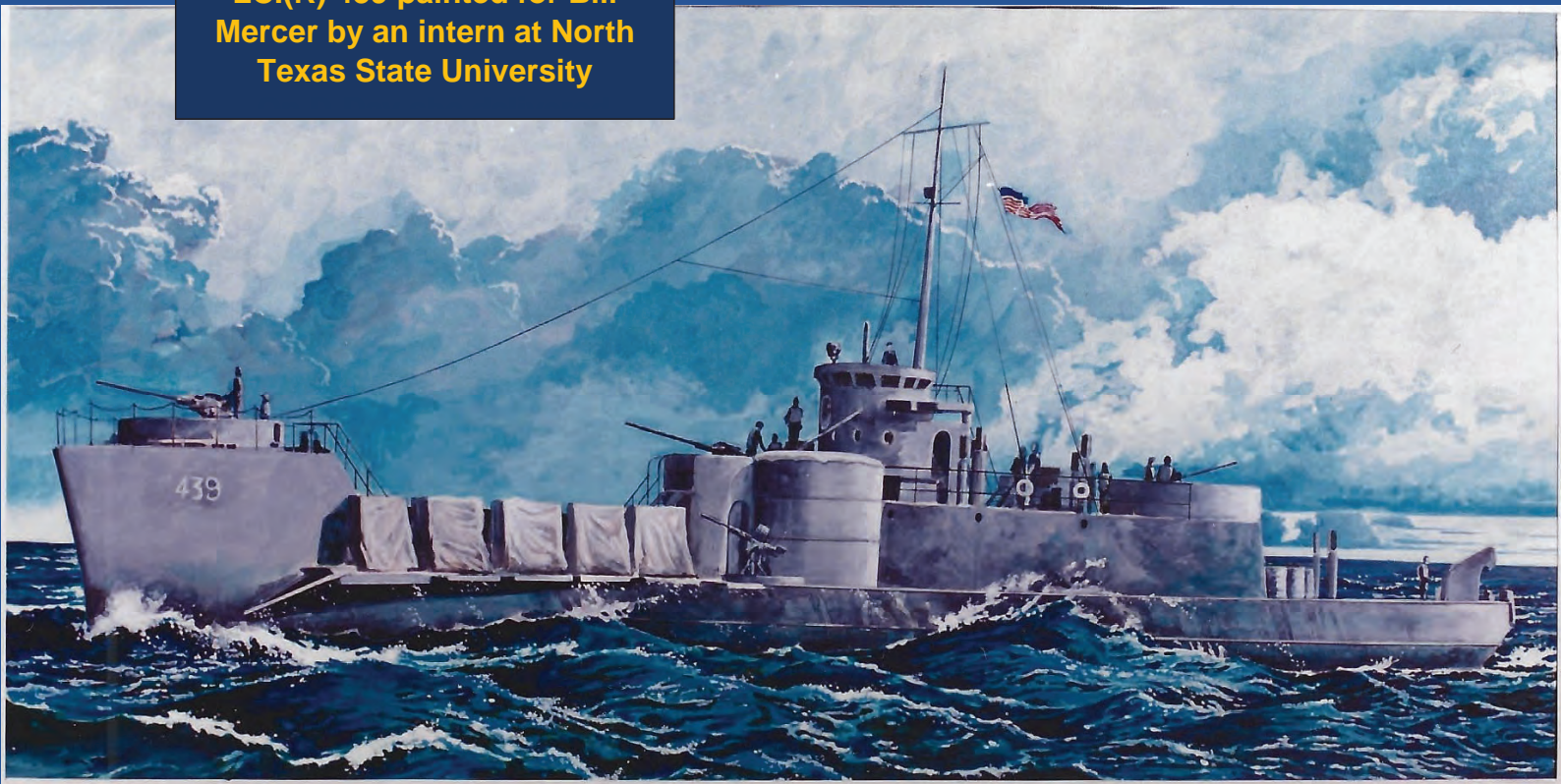


Official Newsletters of the USS LCI National Association and  
The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum

ISSUE 119

WINTER 2022

LCI(R) 439 painted for Bill  
Mercer by an intern at North  
Texas State University



## Inside this Issue...

- LCI-713 restoration & updates
- Book tells LCI(R) 439 story
- Millbury, MA displays 713 model
- Bill Hoyt tells how AKA 53 was saved
- Researching Navy deck logs to get easier



## The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum

Home of the LCI-713

### MISSION

*The Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum (AFMM) is an Oregon Non-Profit organization dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the USS LCI 713. Our Mission is to preserve the history of the Amphibious Forces in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, to educate the public on the rich naval maritime heritage that the Amphibious Forces have played in our nation's history, and the importance of preserving historic naval ships for future generations.*

### INFO

[www.amphibiousforces.org](http://www.amphibiousforces.org)  
[www.facebook.com/lci713](https://www.facebook.com/lci713)

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

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Chairman Emeritus, LCI-43 Veteran

The "Deck Log of the LCI-713" is the Official publication of the AFMM. Membership is available to anyone interested in our mission of historical preservation and education. For more info please visit our website

This publication is a collaboration of the USS LCI National Organization and the AFMM.

**Notice:** The AFMM or USS LCI National Association are not responsible for the accuracy of the content. There is an immense amount of research that goes into some of these articles and we rely on the diligence of the author of each article.



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

**MISSION**

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

**usslci.org**



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

**ABOUT US**

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

**THE STORIES**

- Featured Stories
- Story Archive
- Share Your Story

**THE ELSIE ITEM**

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

**THE LCI EXPERIENCE**

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

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

**Your Story**



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

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

**Contact Us**



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**“Elsie Item”:** Official publication of the USS LCI National Association, a non-profit veteran’s organization. Membership in the USS LCI National Association is open to any U.S. Navy or U.S. Coast Guard Veteran who served aboard a Landing Craft Infantry, to anyone related to an LCI veteran, to any past or current member of the U.S. Armed Forces, and to anyone interested in the history of LCIs.

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

## General Ramblings

### *A Message from the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum*

Dear AFMM, LCI National Association members and followers,

Our gratitude and appreciation for all veterans is unbounded and this year for Veterans Day we are doing something a little special. Our fabulous historian, Dave Mckay will join in with the Millbury Massachusetts Historical Society, for a presentation about the LCI-713. You ask, why Millbury? Well, they raised the Bond funding to build the 713 back in WWII. Check out the interesting article in this issue by Jeff Veesenmeyer.

I'd like to introduce you to a LCI crew member named Bill Leslie. Bill is a professional writer who writes articles for many different military and historical based publications. He is going to be providing some additional articles for our Elsie/Deck-log for your enjoyment. Check out his "Money" and "ASE" articles in this issue. Thank you, Bill!

I never cease to be amazed by the caring and support of our AFMM membership. Like Jeff Fleming, who traveled up to Portland from Arizona to deliver the U.S. flag flown on LCI-417 during the Normandy invasion. And Craig Heath from Utah who delivered the original artwork for the Black Cat flotilla emblem. Then there is Mark Houston, who came on board with AFMM member, Tom Gorham, bearing a beautiful WWII vintage navy chronometer. You can see photos of these items in the LCI-713 update by Jerry Gilmartin in this issue. And these are just recent items; we have had many equally important and unique items contributed to the AFMM collection over the years by our generous membership. These things are part of what makes the LCI-713 so unique and a special place to visit.

As we honor our veterans, let us remember what President Kennedy said: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

*As a final FYI, please note our new mailing address is... 5331 S. Macadam Ave., Ste 258 PMB 1085, Portland, OR 97239-3871*

We hope you all have a wonderful holiday season and please keep the AFMM on your charitable contribution list. We rely on you to keep us going forward.

Thank you all so very much for supporting the AFMM,



*AFMM President*



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

Please fill out the form and return with your check or we accept secure donations online via our website's donation page: [www.amphibiousforces.org](http://www.amphibiousforces.org)

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

**Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum**  
5331 S Macadam Ave  
Ste 258 PMB 1085  
Portland, OR 97239-3871

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Other ways you may show your support:***

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

My Gift Is:         In Memory of     In Honor of

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

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Observations from Officers Country**      from Robert E. Wright Jr.

### **Membership Renewals: 2023**

Hopefully the US Mail will have delivered this 119<sup>th</sup> Edition of the ELSIE ITEM to you before Thanksgiving. I will mail the individual 2023 membership renewal notices right after Thanksgiving. Please take the time to return yours when it arrives in the mail. The USS LCI National Association appreciates your continuous and loyal support which has enabled this Association to carry on telling the stories of the LCI sailors during WWII since 1991.

### **Some thoughts while looking forward to ELSIE ITEM 120**

It has been 81 years since the US entered WWII after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The USS LCI National Association was started 45 years after the war was over. The Association will celebrate its 32nd anniversary in 2023. The Association has hosted 29 national reunions and numerous local reunions. During those 32 years we have been able to collect just a few of the stories from some of the 16,000,000 Americans who served during the War and especially the thousands of men who served on the Landing Craft, Infantry. There were 723 Landing Craft, Infantry commissioned into the United States Navy. To an outsider, each LCI appeared to be the same as the next. But to the men who served aboard these ships, each crewman knew that their LCI was different from any other LCI in the fleet because of the individuals who made up the crew and the officers who commanded them. Over all these years, in each of the previous issues of the 119 ELSIE ITEMS, we have told stories of individual sailors, officers, entire crews, and of their individual LCIs. We still continue to discover more tales of those little LCIs. Every year we are contacted by numerous individuals and researchers who are trying to find factual stories of individual crewmen and the LCI's historical role in WWII. Because of your support we will continue to search, find, record and publicize these important stories.

### **To the Crew of the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum**

I am in awe of your dedication and the continuous efforts to restore and maintain the *LCI 713* as a floating Museum. I hope that the members of the USS LCI National Association will continue their generous support of your worthy endeavor, this year and into the future.

### **As 2022 comes to an end,**

And 2023 begins we continue to hope and work for a better tomorrow for ourselves and our loved ones. I wish everyone, Good Health and all of the Happiness that the Holiday Season brings.

Robert E. Wright Jr., President



## Gator Gossip

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

The COVID-19 Pandemic will have lasting effects for years to come. Families lost loved ones. Reunions were cancelled. Supply and demand pushed prices up and created shortages of everything. One issue of Elsie Item was delayed a week this year due to a shortage of our newsletter paper stock.

The National Archives shut their doors to in person research for two years. Now they are open by appointment only. I emailed them to see if I could obtain deck logs for my dad's ship, *LSM(R) 411*. I received a quick auto-reply. "Thank you for contacting the Textual Reference Branch of the National Archives...we will assign your request to a staff member..." It went on to say that due to the number of requests and the COVID-19 pandemic they were months (probably years) backed up.

I contacted LCI Association Member John Harvey. I knew he had obtained the deck log for his dad's ship *LCI(L) 1071*. It took 11 months from his initial written request before receiving a quote for scanning and shipping of the deck log. But he did get his Deck Log for the *LCI(L)1071*. The National Archives are working on improving the access to these important historical documents. See the article in this issue about how to access deck logs of the U.S. Navy.

Sometimes historical documents are easily accessed by cleaning out an attic. Doug Bowker discovered a green folder while

cleaning out papers from his late father and grandfather. There was a newspaper article about his grandfather being the driving force of a war bond effort that sponsored the *LCI 713* in Millbury, Massachusetts. Bowker was thrilled to find out the *713* was afloat in Portland. He has made keeping this story alive at the Millbury Museum his mission. See more of the story and photos inside.

**Hi Jeff,**

Just got your recent issue (Fall 2022) and read almost all the articles in one sitting. Great job! I sent for a LCI model today. I had thought about building one myself, but it would take a lot of work. I read Ganzberger's book "When Beaches Trembled," a while ago. Very Descriptive.

*Dixon Hemphill*

**Editor's Note:** Doug Bowker built a *LCI(L) 713* model from wood. It took him three months. See the photos along with the Millbury war bond story.

**Hi Jeff,**

Good to hear from you. Wanted to email you to tell you how much I enjoyed the most recent Elsie Item I devoured it cover to cover. My experience with the archives was affected by the pandemic. Took a long time to get a response.

*John Harvey*

**Editor's Note:** John, thanks for your help with the National Archive story.

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

## LCI-713 Update

*By Jerry Gilmartin*

Here are the highlights of the restoration progress and significant events that occurred on board *LCI-713*. We have been very busy working on various projects since the last report:



*We finally installed our newly acquired 20mm cannon from Winston OR VFW Post and Chrysler Flathead 6 stern winch engine. Here's Steve directing the crane placing the tripod onto upper deck. Thanks to Captain Clark Caffal, for the tug and crane time.*

## Volunteer Update:



Our new and youngest volunteer, Andica Olinger, paints the Rudder Room Bilges.

## Visitor Update:



*Crew of Sea Scout Ship "Déjà Vu" visits. They may return to perform some Quartermaster Scout (Eagle Scout Equivalent) Service Projects.*



*We had several US Navy, U.S. Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Navy Admirals and Senior Enlisted visit the LCI-713 during Fleet Week. Among them was Rear Admiral Sacato of Navy Region NW from Everett, WA, his Aide LT Lemay, USCG Commodore Saboe and USCG Master Chief Carrol, Royal Canadian Navy Admiral Mazur and RCN Master Chief Dixon. Here's Jerry explaining the LCI layout to Navy and USCG Brass!*





*The Military Vehicle Collectors Club of Oregon held their annual meeting on board LCI-713.*



*MVCC re-enactors in period uniforms.*



*Portland Metro Paint Recycling employees. It donated many gallons of marine paint to the LCI.*

**Newly Donated Items:**



*Craig Heath, who donated several rare items from his father Bob Heath's LCI-404 from Flotilla 13, The "Black Cat" Flotilla. Craig donated the Flotilla Logo Patch Original Artwork used to make the patch and his father's Shellback Certificate. Previously, the Heaths had donated the Black Cat Battle Signal Flag on Display on board the LCI-713. Here's Craig holding the logo.*



*Jeff Fleming donating Omaha Beach Flag used on USS LCI-417 from his Dad SM3/c Francis J "Dutch" Fleming. Wow! The entire crew was amazed at the significance of this donation. Thank you so much Jeff. Along with the flag came an entire seabag of items, including uniforms and other WWII artifacts.*



Here's Dutch Fleming returning home after the war with High School Classmen, all veterans.



Mark Houston donated this pristine Hamilton US Navy Ships Chronograph, dated 1941 Chronograph came packed inside its original padded shipping container. Thanks Mark!



Dress Blue Uniform of Ken L Stern CO USS LCI-41 donated by his son Paul. with other items including a small LCI shaped Tie Clasp/Lapel Pin complete with engraved number.

## Other Restoration Work:



Restored Power Panel for Army Radios installed on the Conn. Restored by Mark and Jerry.



New sliding photo board for Memorial displays, installed by John and Rich.



Everybody's favorite, the Spud Locker built of Ash wood, built by Jerry and restored by Pete in 2022.



*New German Airplane and Vehicle Label plate translation key display in Troop 2 Museum Area. Label plates from Gordon Smith LCI-43 obtained in North Africa. Thanks to Mike Hyde for the engraved translation plates as well as numerous other descriptive engraved plates throughout the LCI-713.*



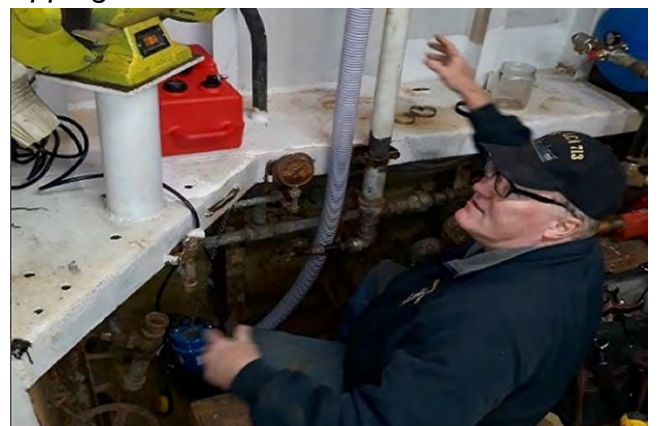
*20mm Orelikon obtained from the Winston, Oregon VFW post on a new display stand built by Steve. Note the fabricated gunsight by master metal worker, Dennis Wehunt.*



*20mm Magazine Loading Frame obtained by Dave McKay, now mounted to Messing and Clipping Room table.*



*New Magnesyn Compass mounting on helm, by Steve and Pete.*



*Jerry wiring new Automatic Bilge Pump to Port Side of Engine Room.*



*John and Sam busy chipping paint on Well Deck prepping for new paint.*



*Steve installing wiring harness and water hoses onto newly rebuilt winch engine.*



*Celebrating Elsie's 78<sup>th</sup> Birthday! USS LCI-713 was Commissioned on September 18, 1944.*



*City of Millbury, MA raised over US \$1Million to sponsor the LCI-713 being built. City Fathers presenting plaque to the crew on day ship was commissioned 10-18-44. We have several displays involving Millbury.*



*Crew of LCI-713 at Ngele Ngele Island Recreation Beach Morotai in May of 1945.*

# LCI(L) 713 Returns to Millbury, MA (1/48 scale model)

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

**31 January 2022:** “Guess what I am building in my workshop, as a gift, for The Millbury Historical Society?” This was the opening entry in a construction timeline for the model being built by Doug Bowker.

Bowker is the grandson of Harold Bowker who spearheaded a 1944 war bond drive to sponsor the construction of an LCI. Harold S. Bowker, treasurer of the Millbury Savings Bank, was also finance director for Millbury’s war bond drive committee. The committee applied for and was approved to take part in the U.S. Treasury Department’s “Sponsor a Fighting Ship” project.



*Harold Bowker surrounded by his four military sons, L-R: Bradley, Dudley, Calvin and Gordon the father to Doug Bowker.*

Their ship, an amphibious landing craft No. 713 was being built at the George Lawley Shipyard near Boston. Their sponsorship goal was set at \$409,000. Bowker is said to have laughed at this goal. He knew his community of only 7,000 people could do more. He raised their goal to \$700,000

pledging \$100 for every man, woman and child in Millbury. And then, they blew that amount right out of the water by raising \$1,048,000...more than doubling their original quota.



*Plaque presentation at the LCI 713 commissioning. Front Row L-R: Lt. Cmdr. Sam Temple, Harold S. Bowker, Millbury Savings Bank, LCI 713 Skipper Lt. (jg) Walter Parris, Lt. Cmdr. Walt Fleming, and LCI 713 Ensigns TS Marlow and Gordon Houser.*

A delegation from Millbury was on hand to witness the commissioning of USS *LCI(L) 713* on September 1944. Harold Bowker asked the Navy if they could provide a plaque to show the ship had been sponsored by the town of Millbury. The request was denied, stating they had no funds for such an item. The Millbury committee funded the sponsorship plaque themselves. It cost just \$4.00.

Fast forward to 2017 when Doug Bowker was going through his late father’s and grandfather’s papers. He found a green folder with original documents, newspaper clippings and photographs of the Millbury war bond fund drive. He Googled *LCI(L) 713* to learn more about the ship and

discovered it was still afloat! It was being restored by the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum (AFMM). He called AFMM President, Rick Holmes to tell him what he had found. Now Bowker was on mission to keep his grandfather's story and Millbury's war effort alive.

On Veterans Day 2021 The Millbury Historical Society held a very successful program about *LCI(L) 713*. There was a donation jar and the Society pledged to double any funds that the audience contributed. With that money the Society purchased a Lifetime Membership to the AFMM. In return, the Society and the people of Millbury got an authentic Navy-issue lifejacket and plaque affixed to the overhead on the *713*-museum ship. The plaque reads:

**THIS FIGHTING SHIP MADE POSSIBLE BY  
THE WAR BOND DRIVE OF MILLBURY, MA  
THANKS TO HAROLD & DOUG BOWKER**

Doug Bowker, a Navy veteran, had obtained plans for an LCI. He spent the next several years learning everything he needed to know about building an LCI model for a ship he had never seen. His construction timeline entry on 31 January 2022, continued with this description of the planned scale...

“40-inches long, 6-inches wide, 5-inches tall. The model is a 1/48 scale model, thus 1-inch = 4-feet.”

**2 February 2022:** “Doing some sanding and shaping of the hull, starting to take shape and look like a real ship. Ordered a bunch of small custom-built items...life rafts, watertight hatches, 20mm gun mounts, life rings, deck stanchions, signal bag box,

ship's crew figures 1/48 scale, and a wherry work boat.”

Bowker typed construction timeline entries almost daily.

**23 February 2022:** “Pilot house and bridge are starting to look good, sanded and painted, resanded and repainted, just like being in the Navy again.”

**21 March 2022:** “Finished up with the bow ramp display today. Primed, sanded and painted the display and it looks reasonable.”

**22 March 2022:** “The June Street Navy Shipyard is proud to announce that the USS *LCI(L) 713* is completed and ready for launching and commissioning.”

**4 April 2022:** A gift, the USS *LCI(L) 713* is also coming with its very own display case for the Millbury Historical Society.”



*The construction site for the LCI(L) 713 model was Doug Bowker's workshop.*

And so, in a smaller way the *LCI(L) 713* has returned to Millbury, Massachusetts. To see the 1/48" scale model in an elegant display case, visit the museum at the Millbury Historical Society in the Asa Waters Mansion.

To see the 158-foot x 25 foot full size model, visit the Amphibious Forces

Memorial Museum in Portland, Oregon.  
Contact Rick Holmes for a tour.



*Doug Bowker spent three months building his LCI(L) 713 model. The original full-size ship was laid down and launched in nine days. It is now on display at the Millbury Historical Society Museum. Bowker built the model. He is grandson of the Harold Bowker, the man responsible for the war bond effort. See story and photos inside this issue.*



*Tours of the LCI(L) 713 were highlight of reunions held in Portland, Oregon. This tour was in June of 2018.*



*Close up of Bowker's LCI(L) 713 model shows amazing details.*



*The Millbury Historical Society has this LCI(L) 713 model on display along with stories and photos of how the community raised over one million dollars to sponsor the ship in 1944.*



*LCI(L) 713 is moored on the Willamette River Swan Island Lagoon in Portland, Oregon. Tours of the ship can be arranged by contacting AFMM.*

# How WWII Changed Our Money

By William Leslie

In the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the invasion and occupation of the Hawaiian Islands was considered a real possibility, so it shouldn't really be surprising that changes to our money first took place there. The fear was an occupation of the islands would put more than \$200 million in currency in the hands of the invading Japanese, and that the same cash might then be used against us in various ways.

As examples, throughout the war the Axis continued to purchase strategic commodities through neutral countries, and their networks of overseas spies also had to be paid. For such purposes Yen and Deutschmarks couldn't readily be used, but American dollars certainly could.

In response to that perceived threat, new currency was released in Hawaii shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, quickly and effectively replacing the territory's entire cash supply. Banknotes called "Hawaii Overprint Notes" were substituted, with each one prominently featuring the word "Hawaii" in large letters across their reverse sides. Hawaii was printed vertically in smaller letters on the front of each note. To further distinguish the replacement currency, the seals to the right of the president's face were printed in brown instead of the usual dark green. Had Hawaii been invaded and overrun, the Federal government would simply have declared that currency worthless and no longer legal tender anywhere in the world.

Residents of Hawaii were given a few months to exchange all their old currency for the specially printed banknotes. Originally the plan was to return all the

turned-in currency to the continental U.S., but the logistics involved with that proved impractical, so it was all simply burned. At first a Honolulu crematorium was used, but when that facility proved unable to keep to a schedule for such destruction, furnaces at a nearby sugar mill were added. Effective on 15 August 1942 it became illegal for residents of Hawaii to have any currency without the word "Hawaii" printed on it. At the same time, banknotes marked "Hawaii" couldn't legally be used in the continental U.S. Those restrictions were lifted at the end of 1944, when all threat of a Japanese invasion of Hawaii was officially recognized as having passed.



The Hawaii bills saw further use when our servicemen in the Pacific Theater were paid exclusively in them. That was done for the same reason: to keep standard U.S. currency out of the hands of the enemy. Because of their distinctiveness, the Hawaii banknotes became sought out souvenirs for many GIs. Lower denomination banknotes were, of course, the ones most kept as a souvenir. \$1 banknotes are by far the more common. Values for higher denominations - \$5, \$10, and \$20, command a large premium. These notes



remain legal tender even today, though they're very rarely found in circulation, as most were destroyed by the Federal government starting in 1946, and most of the surviving ones are kept hoarded by collectors. For similar reasons, a series of banknotes, all dated 1935 with yellow seals, were printed for use in paying our servicemen in North Africa. They also remain legal tender today but are also rarely found in circulation.

The war also affected our coins. As the production of guns, ships and planes increased, and as access to overseas sources of raw materials became more difficult, supplies of some metals ran short. Before the war, nickels were made from 75% percent copper and 25% nickel. From 1942 through 1945, they were instead made with 56 percent copper, nine percent manganese, and 35 percent silver. For those four years nickels had no nickel in them at all. Viewed in light of today's silver prices, that seems amazing; however, in those times our dime, quarter, half dollar and dollar coins were all made of silver; so, the substitution of silver into five-cent coins didn't seem strange. Production of the so called "war nickels" freed up thousands of tons of relatively much more scarce nickel for use in military production. Nickel was, and remains, critical in the manufacture of many electric, medical, power generation and transportation items.

Silver nickels are readily identifiable by their color, which is much more gray than other five-cent coins, and by their large "P," "D" and "S" mint marks (for Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco), which appear prominently above the Jefferson Memorial.

At the end of the war the production of silver nickels ceased when access to nickel

ore returned. Nickels then resumed their prewar composition. Mint marks shrank and returned to their previous location beneath the dates.



To free copper for use in making cartridges, that metal was eliminated from our pennies during 1943. In that year all pennies were made of steel, and they're called "Steelies" by collectors. Unlike silver nickels, which served well as coins, steel pennies quickly rusted, were sometimes mistaken for dimes, and were rejected as trash by magnets in some vending machines. That's why steel cents prove to be only a short-lived - just one-year - experiment.



Of course, our money changed in other ways. Franklin Roosevelt is still on our dimes. John F. Kennedy, considered a war hero, is still on our half dollars. And Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of the largest invasion across water in history, can still be found on the Eisenhower dollar, which still circulates.

By William Leslie. Bill lives in Sandy, Oregon and can be seen driving his restored 1943 Ford Jeep around town.

# Bill Mercer's book tells story of LCI(G) 439

By Jeff Veesenmeyer

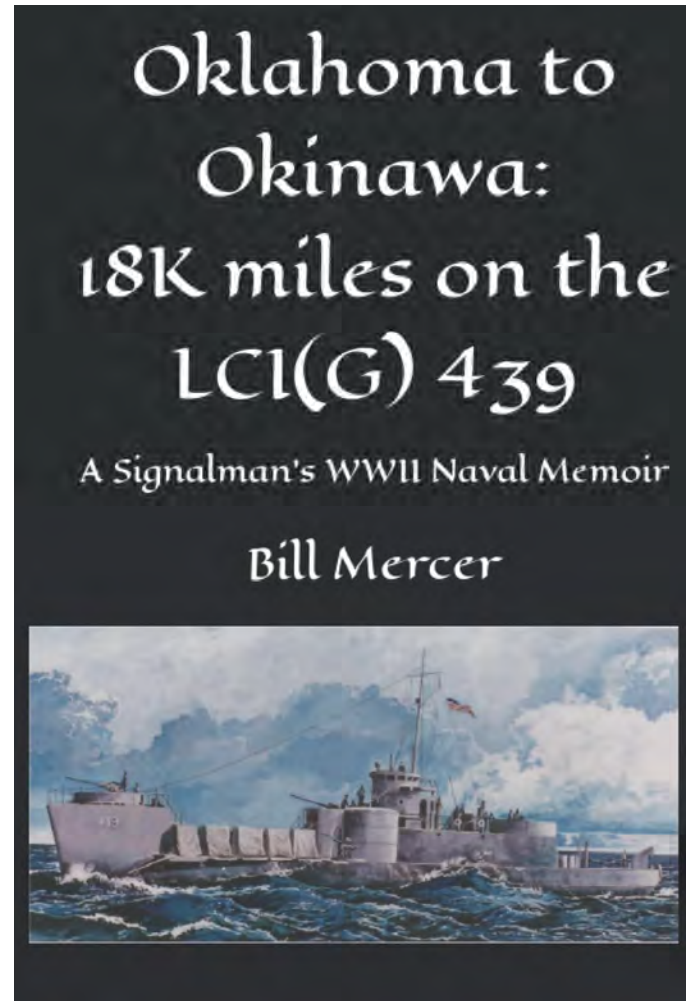
(With excerpts from "Oklahoma to Okinawa")

Signalman Bill Mercer asked, "What is an LCI?" His jeep driver answered, "You'll see when we get there." The jeep peeled off for the busy docks at Pearl Harbor. Mercer had just picked up orders for transfer to a new ship.

Mercer had spent the previous four months on the USS *Rixey*. This former passenger ship was converted to a transport and hospital ship. The *Rixey* participated in the invasion of Guam. Mercer got valuable experience standing signal watches and using his skills. He also experienced an amphibious landing...up close. The Marines on board had a training exercise on an uninhabited island. Newly promoted Mercer SG 3/c was ordered to join them on the beach. This was not the signal watch he had longed for. Loaded down with signal equipment he had to climb down the swaying cargo net to a bobbing landing craft. He was terrified. The Marines shouted up, "Come on Flags we'll catch you."

Mercer wondered what new experiences awaited on his LCI. The jeep slowed and stopped at "A row of funny looking craft," recalled Mercer. "They were upright but leaning in various directions with construction workers clambering all over them making repairs." At the far end was his new ship, *LCI(G) 439*. He crossed the gang planks and looked up at the conning tower that had been half shot off. Shrapnel holes were everywhere. The radio

shack was perforated, and a large part of the radioman's chair was missing. The *LCI 439* had been at the Guam invasion. It was hit by a 5-inch shell, killing three and wounding twenty others. "I was eighteen years old and scared to death," remembered Mercer.



*Shipmates of the LCI(G) 439 knew Bill Mercer had experience as a writer. At LCI 439 reunions they'd ask him to write a book and include their names. So, he finally did. (Copyright 2022)*

But someone had been looking over him. Coming down from the conn was his signal school buddy Charles Craft. Charlie had been assigned to *LCI 439* right out of signal school. When the ship's first-class signalman got transferred, Craft asked the XO to find Bill Mercer, the second-best signalman at signal school. Craft would later

say they were the best two-man signal crew in the US Navy. Their reign began on 9 August 1944 when Mercer joined the crew.



*LCI(G) 439 in a column following LCI(G) 407. Date and location unknown.*

John Neneskern S1/c was a striker signalman. “I liked working the flag bag with Charlie Craft,” remembered Neneskern. “He was the best signalman in the Navy. He’d holler down for CLOSE UP flags, I’d clip them to the halyard and up they’d go.”

The *LCI(L) 439* had been laid down at New Jersey Shipbuilding Corp. and commissioned on 6 August 1943. The first Captain was Robert Schenck. The crew loved him. While docked in San Diego none of the crew had money for liberty. They hadn’t been paid in months. Captain Schenck wired home for \$5,000. He gave each crewmember the cash they requested for liberty. No records were kept. They paid him back when the paymaster caught up to the ship.

The *LCI 439* was converted to a gunboat six months later. It had participated

in operations at the Marshall Islands and Marianas before Mercer joined the crew. After 2 months of repairs the *LCI 439* joined a convoy that would be participating in the invasion of Leyte, Philippines. On 20 October 1944 a massive invasion force consisting of 768 ships and 165,000 troops, approached landing beaches at Leyte Gulf. Mercer stood in the 30-foot conning tower with binoculars peering at one of the largest armadas in history. It stretched from horizon to horizon. The enormity of what he was about to witness gave him goosebumps. The thought of leading the first wave to the beach in this tiny 158-foot ship gave him a huge knot in his stomach.

At 0920 the LCI(G)s lined up to lead the troop landing crafts and provide close in fire support. Mercer was stationed at the flag bag on the main deck. His job was simple, but significant. When the eighteen-year-old sailor lowered a signal flag the invasion began. All 18 LCI(G)s fired their rockets. Neneskern was the 2<sup>nd</sup> loader on a bow 40mm gun during general quarters. His gun crew went below their mount in the winch hatch before rocket firing. Everyone else hit the deck and covered their faces as protection from the toxic backfire of rocket fumes.

“We dropped the rear anchor and began the approach to Orange Beach,” explained Mercer. At 1000 feet the 20mm and 40mm guns initiated continuous fire until troop landing crafts passed through the line. The *439* had expended 430 rounds of 20mm, 1400 rounds of 40mm and 220 rockets. There was a saying that “LCI(G)s firing all guns and rockets have the fire power of a cruiser for 30 seconds.”

The entire landing of 13 waves took only 15 minutes. It was mostly unopposed. LSTs followed an hour later bringing tanks, trucks and heavy equipment. And then General MacArthur walked ashore, through knee deep water to address the Philippine people. He had returned as promised.

The fear Mercer felt during the landing had been unfounded. The operation went perfectly with no casualties. But terror began later that night. Japanese suicide boats and swimmers came out to attack ships at anchor. Wooden motorboats packed with explosives would ram the side of ships. Swimmers hiding under a wooden crate would place a mine on a ship's hull or climb aboard to attack men on watch. Submachine guns were issued to all crewman on watch.

The second night, Mercer was on watch on the conn. A small boat could be heard approaching. He challenged the boat with his red signal light. They didn't respond and kept coming. The officer of the deck shouted, "Challenge them again!" Still no response. The officer yelled, "All hands stand by to fire!" The sound of submachine guns being locked and loaded could be heard over an anguished shout of "Hey don't shoot, we are Americans trying to get back to our ship."

On 24 October Mercer noticed warships racing out of the Gulf. A destroyer came by and messaged, "GET OUT NOW." He messaged back that they were fueling. The reply was immediate. "LEAVE NOW." The impending emergency was the Battle of Leyte Gulf had begun. It would become the greatest of all sea battles. Had the Japanese fleet not been defeated every ship in the Gulf would have been trapped and

destroyed. *LCI(G) 439* and all the amphibious ships at Leyte escaped to New Guinea.

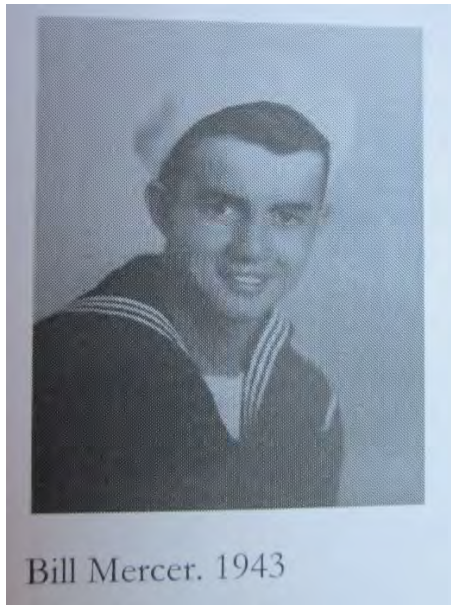
The *LCI 439* went on to participate in invasions of Luzon, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. The ship and crew were in Pearl Harbor for an overhaul when the war ended. Many years later Charlie Craft decided to organize an Old Salts Reunion for the *LCI(G) 439*. He contacted all the shipmates he had stayed in touch with, and they helped spread the word. John Neneskern learned of the reunion from a shipmate who was also from Ohio. That first get together of many Old Salts Reunions was held in Nashville, Tennessee.



Standing below a gun mount during one of the 439 reunions are L-R: Charles Kraft, (unknown), Tom Abbot, Phil Oliva, and Bill Mercer.

Mercer had started a newsletter with war updates while on *LCI(L) 439*. That began his career in newspaper, radio and television sports broadcasting. Forty years later Mercer was master of ceremony at a veteran's event in Texas. Sailors were sharing funny war stories. One guy was telling Mercer how he almost got shot by his own guys at Leyte Gulf while he was trying to get back to his ship at night. He said an

LCI was sending a visual signal. We didn't know what it meant. Mercer broke in with, "All hands. Stand-by to Fire!" The guy looked at Mercer in shock and then fell on the floor laughing. An unbelievable coincidental meeting for both men.



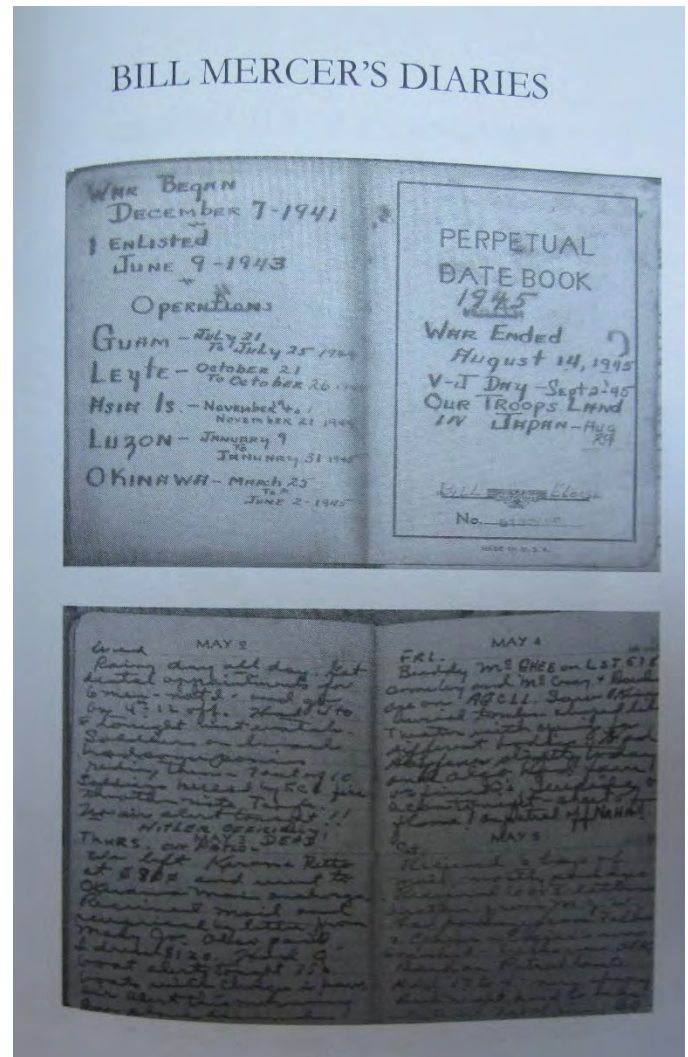
Bill Mercer. 1943



Shipmates hamming it up for entertainment at a LCI 439 reunion. Bill Mercer is far right.



Seaman John Neneskern from Ohio was a striker for the Signalmen rate.



Mercer kept a diary of his war time service beginning on December 7, 1941.

SOURCE: Book by Bill Mercer, "Oklahoma to Okinawa: 18K Miles on the LCI(G) 439."

# A History of Naval Deck Logs – and how to access them

View the list of logbooks that are **online** in the National Archives Catalog: [archives.gov/research/military](https://www.archives.gov/research/military)

“In Navy parlance, any kind of running record is called a “log.” Many such logs are kept on board Navy ships, but only deck logs of commissioned Navy ships are retained permanently. A commissioned ship is a Navy command in her own right, having a distinctive administrative identity and creating records in her own name.”

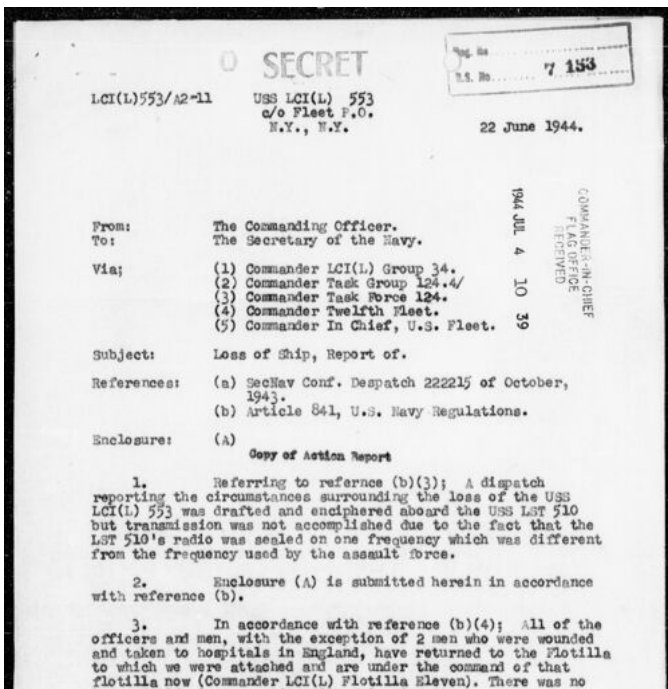
A newly designed website for the National Archives Catalog is being beta tested. It is being modernized for online public access. It will provide enhanced images and improved search capabilities. Deck logs including those of LCIs are being digitized. It is estimated that this project will require 20-million-page scans.



The deck log was to provide a daily chronology of the events for administrative and legal purposes. They included movements and location of the ship. Thus, they were highly classified during the war. Deck logs were to be destroyed if the ship was sinking or abandoned. Today, they provide historical data for research and valuable information for family genealogy.

Deck logs were created to form a chronological account of notable events occurring in and around a ship (or other command, as appropriate), to serve as a reminder to the officers of the deck of their various duties, and to serve as a check on the activities of the officers of the deck. They were also maintained to serve as potential evidence in legal proceedings in naval, admiralty, or civil courts.

The earliest deck log dates back to the American Revolutionary War. A photostatic copy of the original log of the Continental Schooner USS *Wasp* is in the National Archives. The start date is March 9, 1776. Logbooks are transferred from the Naval History and Heritage Command 30 years after the logbook is completed for the calendar year.



Recent searches found partial deck logs for LCIs 553, 341, 423, and 432.

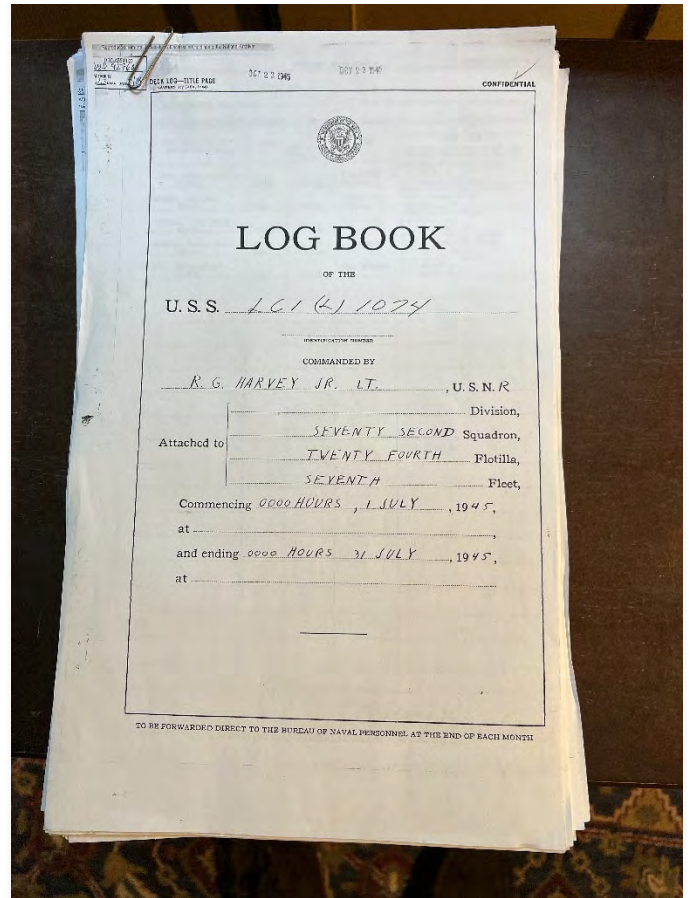
If you are looking to do some research yourself in these interesting records, please contact the Archives II Reference Section for logs that are more than 30 years old at: Archives II Reference Section Textual Archives Services Division 8601 Adelphi Rd. College Park, MD 20740-6001 Phone: 301-837-3510 Email: [archives2reference@nara.gov](mailto:archives2reference@nara.gov)

Visiting the National Archives for research is another way access deck logs. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic closed their doors for two years. The good news is they have reopened by appointment only. The bad news is they are very backed up. Appointments are made many months out.

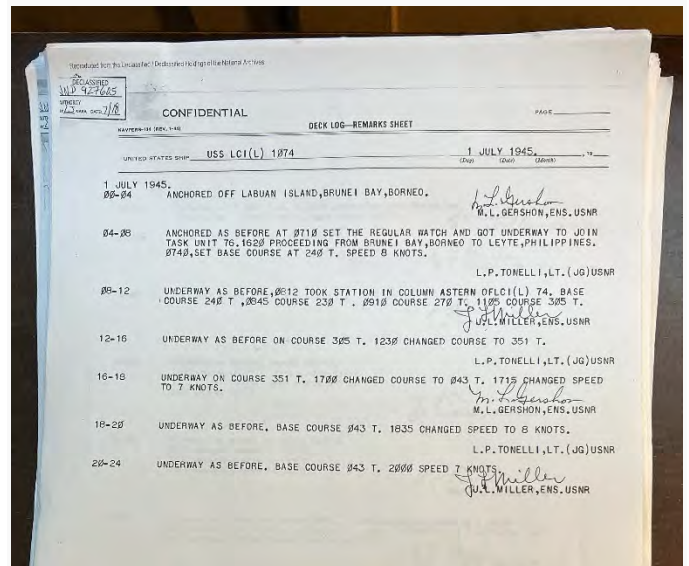
Contacting them by letter takes even longer. Association member John Harvey wrote to the National Archives on March 20, 2021. He was looking for six months of a deck log from his father's ship, LCI(L) 1074. His dad, Skipper Richard G. Harvey, Jr. had obtained the war years of his ship. His son wanted the rest of the 1074 story.

The National Archive's reply came eleven months later. The deck log was available. Scanning and shipping a hard copy would take 30 to 60 days. Harvey received detailed information, a quote for the service and a contact name. The cost for electrostatic (paper) or digital (on disk) copies is \$0.80 per page with minimum mail order fee of \$20.00. There was about 600 pages to the deck log dated July 1945 to June 1946.

Harvey was delighted. Now he could complete his dad's tour of the Pacific that included Bora Bora and the Philippines.



*This is Lt. Richard G. Harvey's Log Book for July 1945. He was skipper of the LCI(L) 1074. His son John Harvey obtained the final year of 1074 deck logs from the National Archives.*



*John Harvey now knows his dad's ship was anchored off Labuan Island, Brunei Bay, Borneo on 1 July 1945. That morning they got underway for Leyte, Philippines.*

# Mistaken identity helped save USS Acherнар

By Ken Pickle, Capt. USNR-R

The invasion of Okinawa began on Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945. Less than 24 hours into the battle, at 0043, USS *Acherнар* (AKA 53) was attacked by a Japanese suicide plane.

The kamikaze penetrated the attack cargo ship's starboard side creating a large hole above the waterline. The resulting explosion then blew a large hole on her port side. *Acherнар* made an inviting target with a length of 459 feet, beam of 63 feet, and a crew of 429.

*LCI(M) 741* under the command of Lt. R. M. Laird, was anchored nearby on *Acherнар's* starboard side. The skipper and Lt. (jg) W. L. (Bill) Hoyt, Jr. were on the bridge. Lieutenant Laird turned to Hoyt and said, "We've got to get out of here. If that ship blows, we're all goners!" Lieutenant Hoyt responded, "Well, if I'm going to get blown to hell, I'd rather be facing the blast than running away from it."

They did not know the identity of the stricken ship, but thought it was USS *Nitro* (AE 2), an explosives and ammunition ship nearly the same size as *Acherнар*. They could see a fire burning and hear ammunition going off. *Acherнар's* injured crewmembers were leaving the ship as it began to list slightly to port.

Thinking their only chance for survival was to get the fires out, *LCI (M) 741* drew alongside *Acherнар* and boarded

the ship using rope ladders. They began to fight fires using their billy pumps.



*The attack cargo ship USS Acherнар (AKA 53) was hit by a kamikaze during the invasion of Okinawa. LCIs came to the ship's rescue and helped put out fires.*

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**“We boarded the ship on rope ladders. We could hear ammunition and 50 cal. shells popping off from the heat of fire”**

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Another ship (perhaps another LCI) on her port side saw what they were doing and came aboard the port side to help fight the fires. Against all odds, and with a lot of water, they were successful in putting out the fires. The deceased Japanese pilot was found still in the cockpit of his aircraft wearing the “meatball” flag.

The crew of *Acherнар* began coming back aboard via rope ladders. They lost 5 men killed and 41 injured, but the ship was saved. *Acherнар* had a long and productive life. One of the crew was awarded a Navy



Commendation Medal for all the welding work he accomplished in making repairs on the ship. *Alchernar* was decommissioned in July of 1963, transferred to Spain, and finally scrapped in 1982.

It will never be known if the crew of *LCI (M) 741* would have gone aboard to fight the fires if they had known the vessel was not the ammunition ship, they thought it was. There was a rumor that the crew would be



*The crew of LCI(M) 741 witnessed a kamikaze attack on the USS Acheron during the first night of the Okinawa Invasion. This photo of LCI 741 was taken the previous year at Palau Islands.*

put in for an award (Presidential Unit Citation) for their actions, but it appears it was never acted on.



A Japanese Zero with the Rising Sun insignia that sailors called the “meatball.”



*A video interview with Bill Hoyt was filmed by Ken Pickle in 2014 at Hoyt's home in Oregon.*

**Authors note:** I learned of this story in the Fall of 2014 in casual conversation with Bill Hoyt. He had never shared his experiences publicly as he was concerned that some might consider it bragging. Bill felt everyone was just doing their job. He was the second (and final) skipper of his LCI and was proud that it made it back to the U.S. under its own power, the only one of 12 in his group to do so.

He passed peacefully on January 20, 2022. He was 99.5 years old. Was active until just a few weeks before his death. Every morning, he did pushups to equal how many years old he was.

Hoyt was a successful independent insurance agent. He felt that his experience on the *LCI(M) 741* helped him in his career. For example, learning about the LCI engines helped him when writing coverages for a manufacturing company. I met him through insurance and was fortunate to call him my friend.

Ken Pickle, Capt. USNR-R

# Armed Services Editions

By William Leslie

Some of the more interesting - and seldom understood - bits of WWII ephemera is actually a hybrid, part Homefront, part militaria.

The Armed Services Editions (ASE) is a series of 1,322 paperback books totaling more than 122 million copies, printed between 1943-1946. The series was conceived, edited, and printed by the Council on Books in Wartime, a non-profit organization founded by booksellers, publishers, librarians, and others. The Council saw the opportunity to have a positive impact on the well-being of our men and women in uniform by forming an organization to print and distribute books, and to communicate why we were fighting. They chose as their motto "Books Are Weapons in the War of Ideas."

Originally, the Council on Books promoted a book collection effort, but this proved impractical. Far too much time was spent collecting and sorting books.

Publishers and authors agreed to accept just 1/2 cent per copy, and the books were sold to the military at cost for distribution to men and women in uniform free of charge.

Although paperback books had been around for several centuries, they were by no means a mainstay in the publishing industry. In December 1941, paperbacks were a very small percentage of total books published, and in general they were only used for cheap thrillers, such as westerns, detective stories, and science fiction novels. "Fine" literature was published almost exclusively in hardback editions. With the ASE series, that began to change.

Armed Services Editions are readily distinguishable from other paperbacks. First, they are not bound on the long edge of the book, like modern paperbacks, but on the narrower end. This had the added benefit that they could be carried in a dungaree pocket, but the binding wouldn't break when the soldier sat down. The cover of each book was clearly marked with *Armed Services Edition* in a one-inch circle. Most of the books were marked "This is the complete book - not a digest." Most covers showed a small representation of the book jacket that appeared on the original hardcover release. Inside, each page held two columns of type, for easier reading. Several sizes were printed, including 3.875 inches by 5.5 inches, and 4.5 inches by 6.625 inches.

At first, a set of 30 titles were selected each month, with 10,000 sets copies designated for the Navy and 40,000 for the Army. Special shipments were directed to American troops in German POW camps. By 1944, all branches of the service were much bigger, and every month 42 books were selected, and more than 155,000 sets were printed.

Shipments were eagerly awaited by the troops. When demand was high, books were sometimes ripped in half - some troops read the second half first, and then swapping for the first half of the book. Books that were considered well written and educational were selected, although not exclusively so. Fiction, history, science, politics, and poetry were also selected.

Ernie Pyle, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, had four of his books in the series. Pyle didn't survive to see his last book printed as an ASE. He was killed by a Japanese machine gunner on Ie Shima shortly before Home Country appeared as the last book in the ASE series.

Armed Services Editions deserve a place on the shelves of militaria collectors, and especially in the footlockers of WWII re-enactors. They are sure to spark conversation. ASE books can be hard to find. They are usually filed on bookstore shelves by genre. For example, Tom Sawyer will be found in the classic fiction section, and *The War of the Worlds* will be found in the science fiction section. Few bookstore owners are familiar with the ASE series. Bookstore catalogs seldom record whether books are in the ASE series, and a question to the owner is usually met with a blank stare. As a result, one must resort to luck, perseverance, or eBay to find them.

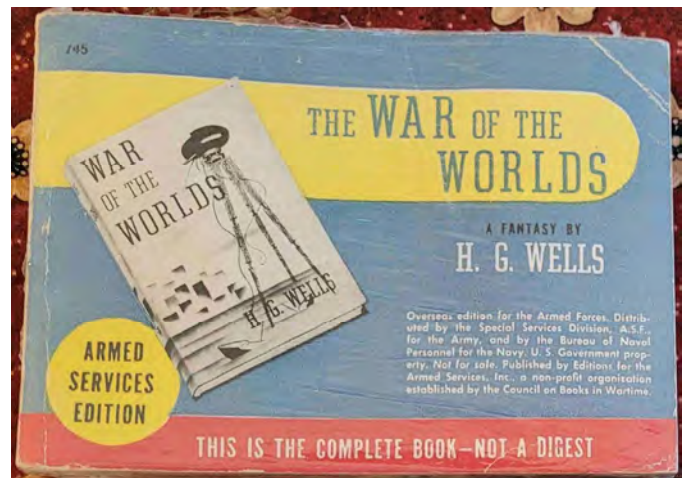
A small library of ASE books related to WWII could be collected, and would include several by Ernie Pyle, *Sad Sack* (the cartoon), *Miracles of Military Medicine*, *Dynamite Cargo: The Convoy Gets to Russia*, *Moscow Dateline 1941-1943*, *Bushido: The Anatomy of Terror*, and others.

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### **Tarzan of the Apes, and the Adventures of Superman are difficult to find**

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Most ASE book prices are low - from \$3 to \$15. Science fiction and fantasy books such as *The War of the Worlds*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Tarzan of the Apes*, and the *Adventures of Superman* are difficult to find in good condition and are more expensive. Expect to pay \$20 to \$50 for these. Although Webster's New Handy Dictionary was reprinted multiple times, copies are very rare, as the dictionaries were simply read to pieces.



*The classic War of the Worlds is a collector's item in the ASE edition.*

Virtually every genre of book was represented: mysteries, biographies, humor, westerns, detective novels, nature books, history, science, self-help, popular fiction, and classics. The series even included poetry. One measure of the popularity of the Armed Services Editions is the number of letters received by the authors. H. Allen Smith, a humorist who saw three of his books printed in Armed Services Editions (two of them printed twice), estimated that he may have received as many as 10,000 letters in response to the ASE editions.

One shipment, scheduled for April 1944 was intentionally delayed so that it could be handed out just before ships were boarded for the D-Day invasion. That's how thousands of copies of Tom Sawyer happened to go ashore on D-Day.

Faced with deciding between extra socks, candy bars, and books, the books often won. The soldiers and sailors preparing for the invasion of France found room for thousands of copies of *Tom Sawyer*, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In*, by Esther Forbes, and *The Robe*, by Lloyd C. Douglas. Some of the books were read aboard landing craft and destroyers as they crossed the channel, and

aboard airplanes, presumably to distract troops from what was coming.

The popularity of the books is evident from the small number of the books that are still around. They were simply read to pieces. Although more than 123 million books were printed and distributed between 1943 and 1947, they are hard to find, although not always expensive.

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## The most popular titles were books by Jack London

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In prewar America, paperback books struggled for a foothold. In part as a result of the ASE series, book publishing industry would never be the same. By 1950, in part through the Armed Services Editions, paperbacks had become a mainstay in the book industry, and were no longer reserved for cheap thrillers.

Millions of uniformed men and women, who may not have read a book in years, eagerly waited, each new shipment. Among the most popular titles were books by Jack London, such as *The Call of the Wild*, and *Tarzan*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Ninety-nine books that were particularly well-received were issued more than once, and Webster's New Handy Dictionary was reprinted four times. Although most of the books were reprints of popular hardback books, the series included several first editions.



*The Armed Services Editions introduced WWII service men and women to classic books and literature while providing respite from war.*

Because ASE books were so eagerly sought after, and because they passed from hand to hand in battlefield conditions, most copies did not survive the war, but with diligence, they can be found, and they represent an affordable collection opportunity.

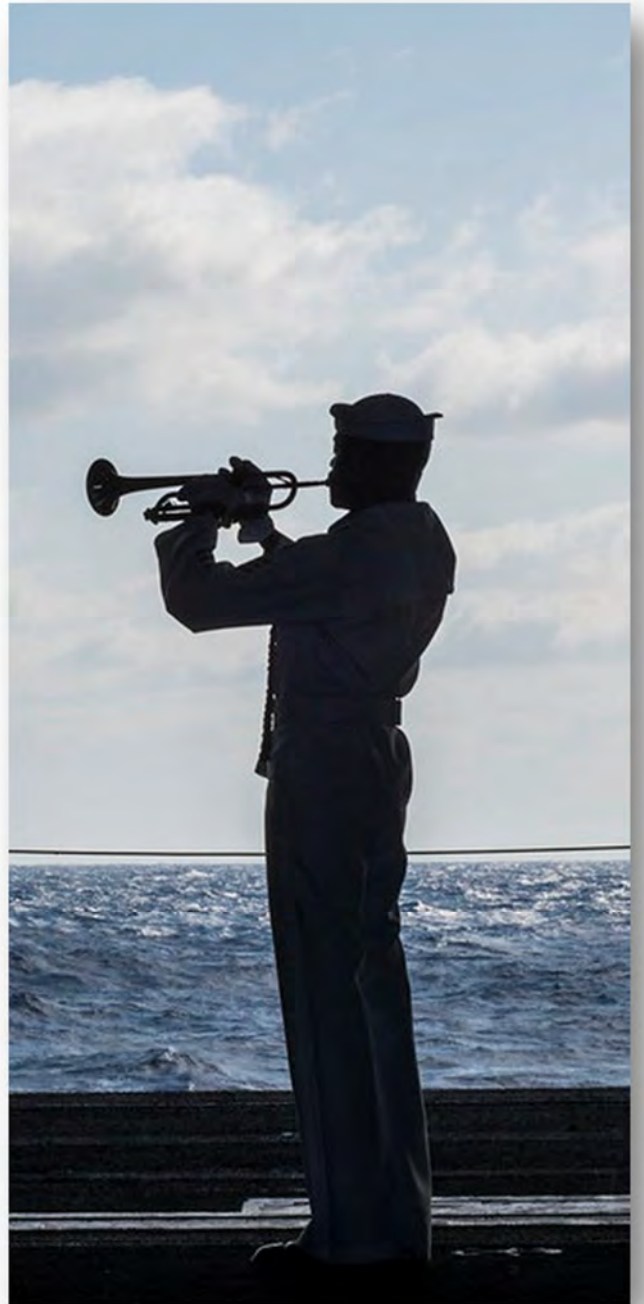
You will find a few of these interesting ASE books in your favorite Museum on the *LCI-713!*

# In Memoriam

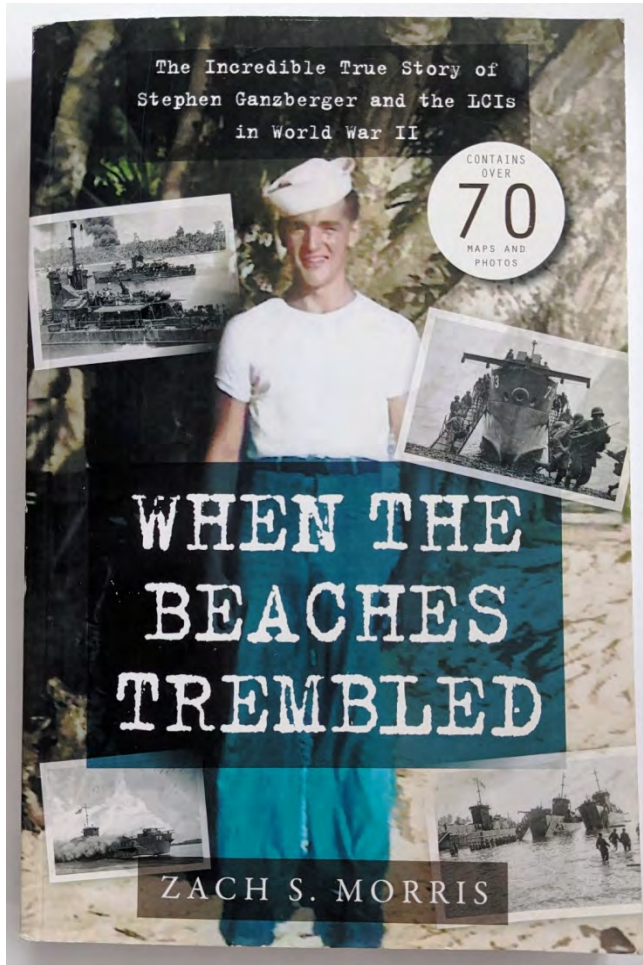
LCI 481  
Albert Pipes

LCI 707  
Cletus Cutsforth

LCI(L) 946  
Lloyd H. Steen



The Personal Experiences one boy's War aboard a LCI in the Pacific but shared by all who were there



**Someday I should write a book...**

I don't know how many time that I have heard that statement. There were so many stories from World War II from those who were there that needed to be told but for thousands of reasons few were actually recorded.

The Author, Zach Morris is the grandson of Stephen Ganzberger. The book that he wrote is a collection of the stories, related from Grandfather to grandson, about what it was like for a young boy to leave his home, and go off and fight a war in a world so foreign to the one he grew up

For anyone who would like to know what the experience was of leaving home, becoming a sailor, and the life aboard an LCI fighting the Pacific War, this book will certainly provide you with a remarkable insight.

I highly recommend this book

Robert E Wright Jr

**You can Order your copy directly from the Author.**

**Signed and Delivered to your door including postage only \$20.00**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

**In case the Author needs to contact you directly**

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this Form to:** Zach Morris  
7755 22 Mile Road  
PO Box 183021  
Shelby Township, MI 48318

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

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

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

P.O. Box 407 Howell, MI 48844-0407



**This War Bond poster helped raise funds for ships and materials during WWII. Millbury, MA raised over \$1 million dollars to sponsor the LCI(L) 713. (See story inside).**

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Safe, Healthy, and Happy New Year.**