



# "THE ELSIE ITEM"

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

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APRIL 2008

ISSUE #63



Photos courtesy of www.navysource.org

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

# THE LCIs AT NORMANDY

*Up close, personal accounts gathered by LCI Historian John France*

## **"THE ELSIE ITEM"**

**Number 63 • April, 2008**

*Official Newsletter 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. Affiliate membership, without voting privileges, is offered to others.*

*Published quarterly by the USS LCI National Association. John P. Cummer, Editor. Any material for possible publication should be sent to the Editor, preferably by email (cummerj@bellsouth.net) or by regular mail to 302 Pinewood Cottage Lane, Blythewood, SC, 29016*

## **CHECK OUT THESE WEBSITES:**

**[www.usslci.com](http://www.usslci.com)**

*Our own website*

**[www.amphibiousforces.com](http://www.amphibiousforces.com)**

*For information on the 713 and Tiny's Ships Stores*

# **Your Dues are Due!**

*Help keep our Association going by your prompt payment*

Annual membership dues - \$25.00 - for Fiscal Year 2008

Please send your dues to:

USS LCI National Association  
c/o Nehemiah Communications, Inc  
101 Rice Bent Way #6  
Columbia, SC 29229



# A Word from the Editor

Greetings again, Shipmates!

With the excitement of our Mobile reunion just around the corner and several quite significant developments underway, there's a lot to pass on to you in this issue. Consequently, you'll find more text and fewer pictures than in other issues. We'll try to regain our balance in the next issue but hope that you will find the readings here challenging and interesting.



## **Our Historians are at work!**

The most obvious difference in this issue is the amount of space devoted to one article. That is because the work of LCI Historian John France, telling the stories which he gleaned first hand from the men who were on LCIs 487, 93 and others during the landings on Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944, is so exciting, gripping and “up-front personal” that we felt it needed to be shared with you in one installment instead of breaking it up into smaller pieces. We are deeply indebted to John for this excellent piece of work; and we are excited about what it promises for the future from our historians. You'll be able to see another outstanding piece of work they have done if you are able to be at our Mobile reunion. There you will see the results of their search for photos of LCIs in the National Archives.

## **Affiliates to the front!**

You will also read in this issue about something else which promises well for our future. We're pleased to announce the appointment of two affiliate members to the Board of Directors. We welcome Joe Flynn and Steve Dudrow as the first wave of the next generation in our Association.

## **Joining Forces with Fellow Amphibians!**

Another bright token for the future is the discussions underway with the LSM/LSMR Association about the possibility of holding joint reunions in the future. Facing similar concerns about dwindling numbers as our members age, the move to join together makes a lot of sense. You'll read more about this exciting development in this issue.

All that plus lots of our regular features! We hope you'll enjoy it all, and give us feedback on the developments and issues you read about here.

*-John Cummer*



# STILL TIME TO MAKE IT TO MOBILE!

**Great fellowship with your shipmates!**  
**The great Naval Air Museum in Pensacola!**  
**The historic USS Alabama!**  
**A beautiful city of culture and tradition!**  
**Bellingrath Gardens**



**Hurry!**

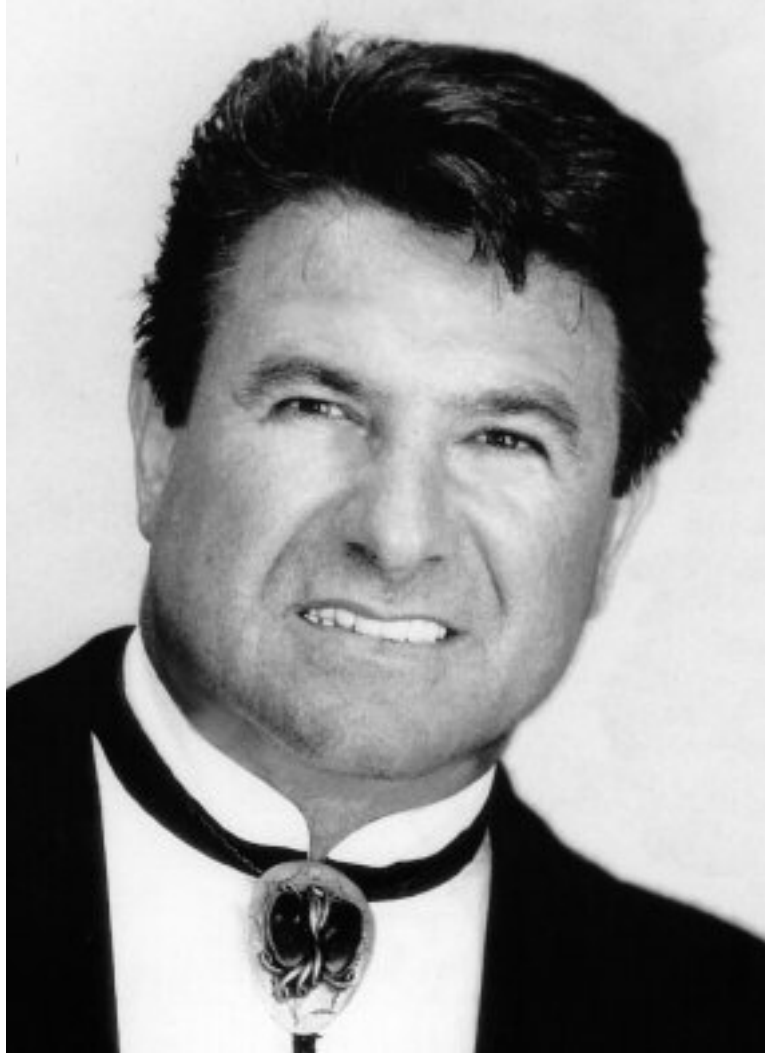
March 28 is the official cut off date for registering for the Mobile reunion, but if you find out after that date that you can make the reunion, please register! Most likely, Armed Forces Reunions will be able to accept your registration form and payment, but they'll contact you if there are any problems.

Details and registration forms are included again in this issue.

# Nationally-Recognized Speaker to Highlight Mobile Reunion Banquet

“An American In Love With His Country” will be the theme of the Mobile reunion banquet speaker, James Bruce Joseph Sievers. The former Green Beret has spoken to more than 7,000 groups across America during the past 30 years. He comes with the high recommendation of Joe Flynn and the other LCIers in California who heard him at their Pearl Harbor Day luncheon.

In addition to his many speaking engagements, Sievers has been invited to the White House to present his program for Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. President Ronald Reagan, along with the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, awarded him the George Washington Medal of Honor for the same presentation he will make to the LCI banquet. Toastmasters International has bestowed upon him the prestigious Communication and Leadership Award. The Daughters of the American Revolution have honored him with their National Medal of Honor. He has been featured in many national publications, such as *People* magazine, and is a published author with five books to his credit.



*James Bruce Joseph Sievers*

“He is a soldier first,” says Joe Flynn. “He served in the Special Forces in Vietnam, and spent years afterward crisscrossing the US talking with people and writing. We know many who are in love with their country, but few have the gifts of writing and speaking abilities that he possesses.”



## USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at [www.armedforcesreunions.com/lci](http://www.armedforcesreunions.com/lci) All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before March 28, 2008. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

**Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.**  
**PO Box 11327**  
**Norfolk, VA 23517**  
**ATTN: LCI**

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	Nametag Completed _____

<i>CUT-OFF DATE IS 3/28/08</i>	Price Per	# of People	Total
<b><u>TOURS</u></b>			
THURSDAY: PENSACOLA	\$56		\$
FRIDAY: USS ALABAMA	\$53		\$
SATURDAY: BELLINGRATH GARDENS	\$43		\$
<b><u>MEAL</u></b>			
SATURDAY: BANQUET <i>(Please select your entrée)</i>			
SEARED COCONUT MAHI-MAHI	\$42		\$
CHICKEN PICCATA	\$42		\$
<b><u>MANDATORY PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE</u></b>			
Includes Hospitality Room and administrative expenses.	\$20		\$
Total Amount Payable to <b>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</b>			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME

FIRST \_\_\_\_\_ LAST \_\_\_\_\_ NICKNAME \_\_\_\_\_

LCI # ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ SPOUSE NAME (IF ATTENDING) \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST NAMES \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, ST, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PH. NUMBER (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS \_\_\_\_\_

*(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly with hotel)*

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS?  YES  NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

PLEASE SPECIFY BANQUET SEATING PREFERENCES IF DIFFERENT FROM YOUR LCI# \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_ PH. NUMBER (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

ARRIVAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTURE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES  NO  ARE YOU FLYING?  DRIVING?  RV?

***You can register online and pay by credit card at [www.armedforcesreunions.com/lci](http://www.armedforcesreunions.com/lci)***

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-5:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays)**. Call (757) 625-6401 or email [cancel@afri.com](mailto:cancel@afri.com) to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion.

**RENAISSANCE RIVERVIEW PLAZA HOTEL – MOBILE, AL**  
**(800) 922-3298**

The Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel is located at 64 South Water Street, Mobile, AL 36602. Call the hotel for accurate driving directions. The downtown Mobile hotel is connected by skywalk to the Arthur R. Outlaw Convention Center. Located within miles from the hotel, guests can visit the Oakleigh Historic District or the Robert Trent Joes Golf Trail with 54 championship holes at Magnolia Grove

The Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel has 363 guest rooms and 11 suites. The Renaissance Hotel is a non-smoking hotel. Guest room amenities include coffee maker/tea service, iron and ironing board, alarm clock, hairdryer, CD player, and cable/satellite TV. You can enjoy use of the pool, whirlpool, safety deposit boxes, lobby ATM, valet and laundry service, wireless high-speed internet access, hotel gift shop and business center.

**Harbour Room** serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. **Fathoms**, a delightful Mobile restaurant and lobby lounge serves appetizers from 2pm-11pm. **Cybercafe** is a coffee house serving gourmet coffee and snacks. Room service is also available. There are also a number of restaurants just minutes from the hotel.

Handicapped accessible rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservations. Hotel parking is offered at \$12 for self parking and \$16 through valet. Adjoining the hotel is the city-owned Central Parking Garage; they offer secure and covered parking at a rate of \$12 per day. All parking fees are current and subject to change.

Airport Shuttle Service provides transportation to and from the Mobile Regional Airport. Currently shuttle service is available for \$18 one-way per person and \$33 round trip per person. If you have any further questions or need any information please call the shuttle service directly at (800) 357-5373. Hotel check-in time is 3:00pm; check-out is 12:00 noon.

For RV hookup service, call Aces RV Park, approximately ten minutes from the hotel. Please call (251) 460-4633 for information, reservations, and directions.

Should you require a wheelchair, please contact the guest services desk at the hotel or Oak Ridge Home Medical. Please call (251) 666-0891 for information and to make any reservations and schedule a delivery.

**For reservations, please call 1-800-922-3298 or  
please visit their website at [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com) and use Group Code LCILCIA**

\*\*\*\*\* CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL \*\*\*\*\*

**USS LCI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION – HOTEL RESERVATIONS**  
**REUNION: APRIL 30-MAY 4, 2008**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS (if available) \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE # ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

ARRIVAL DATE \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_ AM/PM DEP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF ROOMS NEEDED \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN EACH ROOM \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL REQUESTS:** Wheelchair accessible room \_\_\_\_\_ King Bed \_\_\_\_\_ Two Double Beds \_\_\_\_\_

Bed types are not guaranteed

**RATE:** \$109 plus tax (currently 14%) Group rate honored three days prior and three days post reunion dates, based upon availability.

**CUT OFF DATE: 3/28/08.** Reservations received after this date will be processed on a space and rate available basis.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled by 6:00pm on the arrival date. Record your cancellation number. Call the hotel to cancel.

**GUARANTEE:** Reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit, enclosed.

Mastercard \_\_\_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_\_\_ AM. EXPRESS \_\_\_\_\_ DISCOVER \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE (regardless of payment method) \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel, 64 South Water Street, Mobile, AL 36602 \*\*Attn: Reservations\*\*

# California LCI Hosts Pearl Harbor Day Luncheon In Oceanside, CA

The California flotilla of the USS LCI National Association had a good turnout for the 11th annual Pearl Harbor Day luncheon Dec. 15 in Oceanside, CA. Some 27 members, wives and guests were on hand to hear speaker Bruce Sievers, "An American in love with his Country."

Those in attendance were honored with a powerful performance by this Special Forces Veteran who after his Viet Nam service criss-crossed America to better understand his country and his countrymen. And while doing so he wrote and published five books, and poetry and produced a number of CD's of his writing. Mr Sievers has been invited to present his program at the White House by Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan and H.W. Bush, for many Senators, numerous celebrities, and almost every service, fraternal, or religious group in the country. He has also been nominated for the post of Poet Laureate for the USA. Elsie Item sailors and guests shared one thing in common with our speaker; an unabashed love of our Country.

Jim McCarthy, California Director was unable to attend but he was much involved in the planning and the fine tuning of the gathering. And, Shirley Paley, Jim's "main squeeze" was the official Gangway greeter to welcome all attendees. Thirteen LCI's were represented, with two crewmembers each for the 346 (Ed Carson and Leonard Martin) and the 373 (Jimmie Prime and Joe Canzone.)

With door prizes donated by Joe and Frances Canzone and Leonard and Betty Martin, just about everyone went home with a gift. Folding chaise lounges, wind up flashlights, and his and hers matching gold watches brought smiles to the faces of many winners.

The food was tasty, the company was good and the conversation was lively. One thing about LCI get togethers; there is rarely a lull in the conversation. And even in those rare moments of silence there is always that comfort of knowing that you are in the company of men who walked the decks of those small ships and who understand and shared your experiences in time of war.

We parted with salutes, waves and rounds of "Until we meet again."



*Head Table: Bruce Sievers, Speaker; Joe Flynn Asst. California Director; and Shirley Paley, Jim McCarthy's "main squeeze."*



*Bruce Sievers, Speaker.*





# WELCOME ABOARD!

Not quite so many as last time, but we're delighted to welcome each of these shipmates and members of their families. We hope you will find great satisfaction in hob-nobbing with old shipmates and making new friends in the process. To help our members locate shipmates, we're again listing them by ship number. If you want fuller addresses or telephone numbers, just let us know. Unless the person has told us not to release that information, we'll be happy to provide it to you.

Welcome!

## New Members

### **LCI(G) 65**

J. R. Reid  
Huntsville, AL

### **LCI 536**

Earl H. Gillette  
Woodbury, CT

### **LCI (FF) 762**

George H. Weber  
W. Sacramento, CA

### **LCI 874**

Joseph C. Richotte  
West Warwick RI

### **LCI (Number Unknown)**

Kenneth K. Frisbie  
Woodbury, CT

### **LCI (Number Unknown)**

John H. Farrell  
Elkton, MD

## New Associate Members

### **LCI 235**

Douglas Calapa  
Centereach, NY

### **LCI 412**

Susan W. Reid  
Kansas City, MO

### **LCI 773**

Paula Riehl  
*(Daughter of Walter Hlebechuk)*  
Boise, ID



# LCI REUNIONS FROM COAST TO COAST!

## New Mexico LCIers Host Reunion On Veteran's Day

Twenty- five percent of all the LCIers living in New Mexico attended their state reunion!  
All three of them!

But the three loyal LCIers made up for their small number by inviting other area veterans to join them for a Veteran's Day luncheon and program in Roswell, NM. Thirteen other local veterans joined the LCIers for lunch at Pepper's Grill and to hear Jim Leaken of Santa Fe, who was a Signalman, Second Class at the Normandy Invasion, describe interesting experiences he has had during his career in the State Department, working in fourteen different embassies.

The group also viewed a DVD showing LCIs in action and each LCIer was presented with a copy of the video. All veterans were also presented with a gift card from Wal-Mart.



*(l to r) New Mexico LCIers Jim Leaken, Mick Greenbank, Moss Mills*

The small but enthusiastic group decided to meet on Veteran's Day again next year in Albuquerque.

Clinton "Mick" Greenback serves as New Mexico State Director.

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## Ohio LCIers Meet For their Fourth Annual Reunion

The Ohio LCI Association held their fourth annual reunion in Columbus, Ohio, September 25-26, 2007. Approximately 40 were in attendance; 13 of them being Ohio LCIers. State Director Jim Aydelotte and Treasurer Diane Churchill were pleased to find more and more family members joining them for reunions.

Again, one of the most popular activities was telling "war stories" in the hospitality room. This year Bob Dotson brought VCR tapes of LCIs in action during WWII and Dick Churchill brought the DVD produced by LCI Historian Dennis Blocker which was shown at the national reunion in Branson last year.

The Wednesday evening banquet began with a memorial service to honor LCI shipmates who have passed away during 2007.



*(l to r) Joe Ramono, LCI 1010, and Ohio State Director Jim Aydelotte, LCI 26 conduct the memorial service at the Ohio Reunion.*



Following the dinner, the group enjoyed hearing guest speaker Troy Cox, Command Master Chief, U.S. Navy. His presentation proved to be the highlight of the evening.

Distribution of door prizes and a raffle closed the evening's festivities. The main raffle item was an LCI model made and donated by Bob Dotson. Proceeds went to defray expenses of the reunion and results were so satisfactory that it was decided to repeat the feature next year. Plans are already underway for the fifth Ohio reunion scheduled for September 9-10, 2008.

*Submitted by Diane Churchill  
Treasurer, Ohio LCI Association*

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## **Indiana Association of USS Landing Craft (LCI) Meets in Lafayette, Indiana**

Jim Ransom, State Director for Indiana organized a get-together for Hoosier LCIs in Lafayette, Indiana, on August 25, 2007. Those in attendance were Harry Hudlow-LCI-46 (*West Lafayette*), Guy Stayton-LCI-400 (*Akron*), Keith Cooper-LCI-351 (*Lafayette*), Archie Krout-LCI-19 (*Crawfordsville*), Jim Ransom-LCI-41 (*West Lafayette*), Francis (Dutch) Fleming -LCI-417 (*Lafayette*), Joe Harris-LCI-600 (*Warsaw*), Joe Di Girolamo-LCI-654 (*Mishawaka*), Bob Morrow- LCI-699 (*Indianapolis*) and Bob Klug-LCI-540 (*South Bend*).

"It was fun," says Jim, "and we had a good time renewing some acquaintances from last year and passing along stories of some of our LCI experiences".

Jim plans to poll his fellow Hoosiers to see if they want to try a reunion again next year. He would appreciate hearing from anyone interested. Jim can be reached at 616 Terry Lane, West Lafayette, IN 47906-2754. Phone: (765) 746-1380. FAX: (765) 746-1482; or by email at [Jim@616terry.com](mailto:Jim@616terry.com)



Photo courtesy of [www.navsource.org](http://www.navsource.org)



# JOINT REUNIONS WITH LSM/LSMR ASSOCIATION UNDER DISCUSSION

Discussions are underway about the possibility of joining with the USS LSM/LSMR Association for joint reunions following our 2009 reunion in Portland, Oregon.

David K Miller, President of the USS LSM/LSMR Association, initiated the talks with a phone call to John Cummer. Citing the same circumstances we face—diminishing membership as we age—Miller suggested that by joining for reunions we would continue to enjoy large enough attendance at reunions to enable us to negotiate more favorable rates with hotels.

The possibility of future joint reunions is made easier by the fact that both Associations use Armed Forces Reunions, Inc., as their reunion planners. Ted Day, President of Armed Forces Reunions, Inc., has expressed his support and has pledged to work with us to bring this about.

Since both Associations have reunions planned for 2008 and 2009, the first opportunity for joint reunions would be 2010. One issue to be addressed is the time of reunions. The LSM/LSMR Association has been meeting in the fall whereas we have been meeting in the spring.

“This is absolutely no deal-breaker,” said LCI President John Cummer. “We can certainly compromise to work out a mutually agreeable time of the year for reunions.”

Both Miller and Cummer feel that the advantages of joint reunions far outweigh any difficulty that might be encountered. They agree that there is no need for merging into one Association but that we could enjoy each other’s company in many of the reunion activities such as hospitality rooms, and sight-seeing expeditions, while holding separate business meetings. Decision on holding joint Memorial Services or banquets would be made as plans progress.

President David Miller, and perhaps other LSM/LSMR officers, plan to meet with the Officers and Board Members of the LCI Association during our Mobile reunion for further discussion and, hopefully, firm up decisions on plans for joint reunions. Cummer plans to visit with Miller and the LSM Association when they meet for their 2008 annual reunion in Savannah, GA. Dates for their reunion are September 18-23, 2008.

Miller reports that the LSM/LSMR Association has about 2,400 members. The current membership of the LCI Association is just below 2,000. Since LSMs were a relatively late entrant into the WWII amphibious fleet it is likely that the average age for LSMers might be a year or two less than LCIers.

LCIers who served in the Pacific area are more familiar with LSMs than were those who served in the European Theater of Operations. Many LCIers, after returning stateside after the Normandy landings were assigned to LSMs as their next duty station, so there is familiarity between the two groups.

Miller, who served aboard USS LSM 178, resides in Saegertown, PA.



# Connie Mulherin Resigns from Board; Affiliates Flynn and Dudrow Appointed

It was tough to hear him say it.

Connie Mulherin, long-time member of the USS LCI National Association and, for the past few years a member of the Board of Directors, decided it was time for him to “hang it up.”

Citing significant health problems, Connie asked to be relieved of his duties as a member of the Board of Directors. In a unanimous recognition of Connie’s contribution, the Board voted to confer the status of “Director Emeritus: upon him. He will be kept fully informed as to the Association’s business and will be invited to share his opinion on any issue as he wishes.

But there is an upside to the disappointment of Connie’s resignation!

Sensing that the timing was right for such a move, President Cummer recommended and Board members approved the appointment of Associate Member James Steven “Steve” Dudrow as Connie’s replacement. Since the by-laws permitted the appointment of additional board members Cummer also asked Affiliate Member Joe Flynn to join the Board. Again, the Board unanimously approved.

Long-time member Joe Flynn is well known to many LCIers, especially to those in California. For some time Joe has served as right-hand man to California Chairman Jim McCarthy in organizing the annual California reunions. With the confinement of Jim to a residential health care center for veterans, Joe assumed Jim’s duties and presided at the last California reunion banquet. (See story elsewhere in this issue)

Steve Dudrow, son of “Jimmie” Dudrow, who served aboard LCI 358, is a more recent member but, from his first contacts with the Association, has demonstrated a great desire to be a part of maintaining the history and heritage of LCIers. Upon meeting President John Cummer at the dedication of the Amphibious Man Memorial at Solomons, Maryland recently, Steve expressed his desire to be of service to the Association in any way he could.

Steve’s father served aboard LCI 358 in the Solomon Islands, New Guinea and Philippines. His father passed away in 1987. Steve and his wife Gwen have been married for 34 years. They have two sons, aged 31 and 27. After a 31 year career at AT&T/Lucent, he “retired” in 2001 to work as a Network Administrator in the office of the Sarasota (Florida) Supervisor of Elections. As of January 1, 2008, he is a Project Manager for SimplCTI, an international software integration firm.

In his “off duty” time, Steve has coached hockey for some 30 years. He has coached teams to Colorado State Championships.

We are proud to welcome both Joe Flynn and Steve Dudrow to the Board of Directors.



*Joe Flynn*



*Steve Dudrow visits the 713*



# Harry Daves Gets his Medal—Only 65 Years Late!

Persistence does pay off!

With the help of Representative Ron Paul, Texas (who has been much in the news recently as a Presidential Candidate), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal has recently been awarded to LCler Harry Daves, of Dayton, Texas, for his service aboard LCI(L) 48 during the invasion of Sicily.

Daves, a long-time member of the USS LCI National Association, proudly informed us of the long-awaited recognition after receiving a letter last August from the Secretary of the Board of Decorations and Medals in the Office of the Secretary of the Navy informing him that “the Secretary of the Navy has approved the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal to recognize Mr. Daves’ meritorious service,”

The citation tells how LCI(L) 48, during a night landing in Sicily, unexpectedly hit a sand bar preventing the craft from reaching the beach. Daves, “...volunteered to carry a 45 pound anchor ashore, with a line attached to guide the soldiers to land, despite encountering deep holes caused by earlier bombings. He found a safe route, anchored the line, and assisted the troops ashore.”

The citation further describes how , when heavy surf caused his craft’s landing ramp to fly wildly and sever the shore line, Daves was nearly stranded, but was able to swim and find his way back to the craft just as the ramp was being raised to get underway.

The citation closes as follows: “By his courageous actions, steadfast initiative and loyal dedication to duty, Fireman First Class Daves reflected credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

We extend our hearty congratulations to Harry for this belated recognition!



*Photo courtesy of [www.navsourc.org](http://www.navsourc.org)*



# IN MEMORIAM

*“Almighty and eternal God, from whose love we cannot be parted, either by death or life; hear our prayers and thanksgiving for those whom we here remember. Grant unto sorrowing family and shipmates the blessing of your peace that passeth understanding”*

LCI 5  
Robert R. Taylor

LCI 90  
Fred E. Porter

LCI 336  
Keith J. Rudert

LCI 343  
John Gaught

LCI 393  
Maurice J. White

LCI 450  
John Manuel

LCI 450  
Norman L. Sperre

LCI 455  
James A. McGee

LCI 555  
Louis G. Yealdhall



LCI 579  
Bill E. Drye, Jr.

LCI 633  
Nicholas Annitti

LCI 651  
John E. Johnson

LCI 696  
James C. Cale

LCI 760  
Harold F. Paul.

LCI 773  
Robert H. Craft, Sr.

LCI 803  
Austin F. Shute

LCI 1027  
William G. Poisson

LCI 1068  
John A. Laudicina



# Board to Consider Vice President Selection

## Cummer to stand for re-election; Scurlock asks for relief

In a departure from the normal procedure, the annual election to the offices of President and Vice President will need to be handled in a different manner this year.

Rod Scurlock, after serving two terms as Vice President, has asked to be relieved of his duties, citing heavy work pressure.

“I have been so entangled with our company that I haven't been able to spend the time I should have for the good of the LCI organization,” said Rod. “I am going to have to pass up the reunion in Mobile. Our company just took on a major job north of here that is going to take us past the reunion time. I knew this was coming, but I kept holding back hoping that the timing would be better, but it came right on the dot. I think the best thing for the organization would be for me to resign and let someone with more time take over.”

“This is a genuine disappointment,” said Cummer. “I do understand Rod's situation and want to support him in his decision, but he has been a valuable member of our board and will be sorely missed.”

Normally, the President and Vice President indicate their willingness to stand for re-election and other nominations are sought through the *Elsie Item*. With insufficient time to advertise for nominations before the Mobile reunion, the Board of Directors will consider other options and present a recommendation to the membership at the business meeting in Mobile.

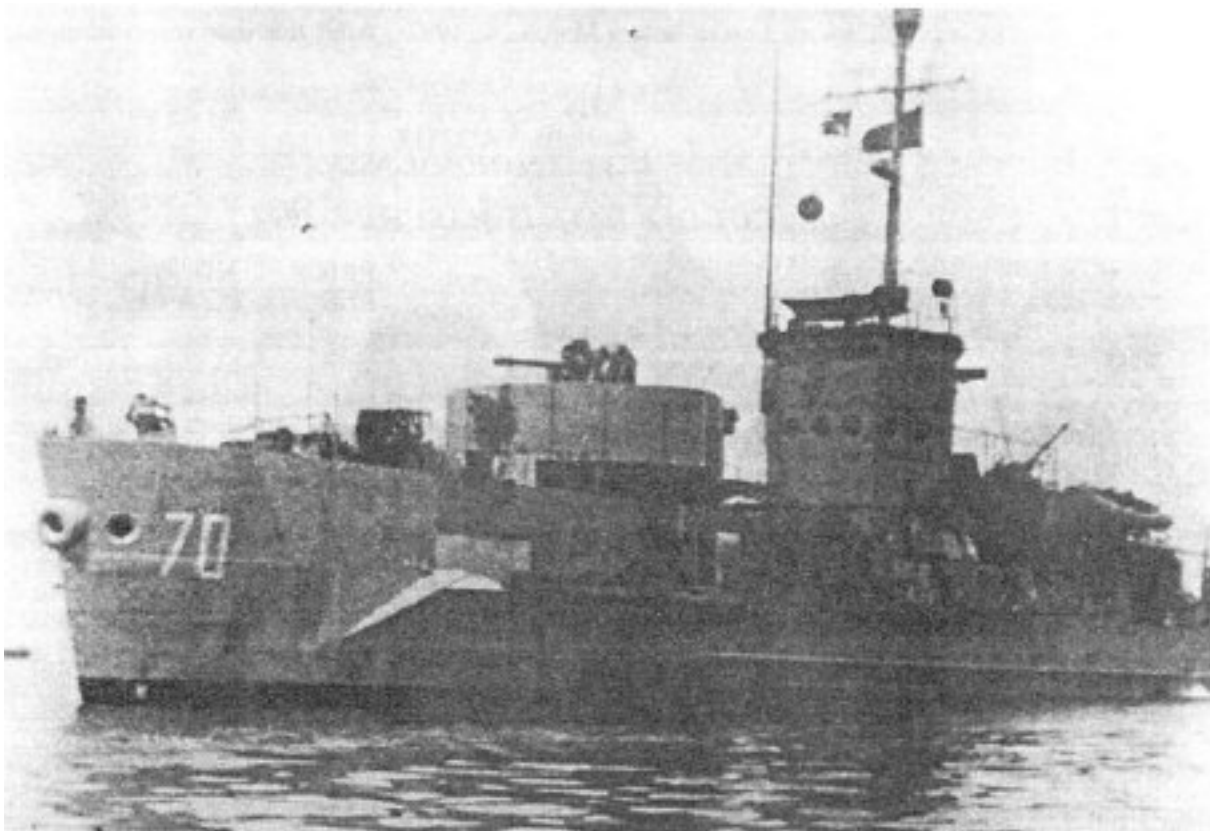


Photo courtesy of [www.navysource.org](http://www.navysource.org)





# LCIers: Recruit Your Family Members as Affiliate members of the USS LCI National Association!

By  
Joe Flynn

**With an eye on our future, newly-appointed board member Joe Flynn wants to see lots more family members join the Association.**

First, Uncle Sam Needed You. Now the USS LCI National Association needs your help in getting the next generation, or two, as Affiliate Members to carry on the history of LCIs and the men who manned them.

Relief is in sight for all of you sailors who have made known and kept alive the history and tradition of the amphibious forces in general and the LCI ships in particular through your work with the USS LCI National Association!

The next generation is now moving up to locate, document, and make known to the American public the history of LCI's and the men who sailed them in the invasions of WW II and to take active part in all the activities of the Association..

This support group, known as the LCI Affiliates, met and organized at the 2007 National Reunion in Branson, MO. Roger Gray, who had been appointed to the National Board of Directors, chaired the meeting, along with John Cummer, President of the Association. Forty of the eighty Affiliate members attended that meeting, and two; Dan Blocker and John France volunteered to serve as LCI Historians for the Pacific Area and the Atlantic European Area respectively. They have been busy since then locating, cataloguing and indexing LCI archives. And they provided an excellent summary of their activities in the Jan. 2008 issue of *Elsie Item*. So the work has begun, but there is much left to do. We need more Affiliate members to do the research and expand the efforts now underway.

Now here is what we would like you LCI sailors to do: Recruit members of your families; sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, nieces, nephews or other interested relatives, or friends you would like to sponsor. Affiliate memberships are \$25 a year, and include all the *Elsie Item* Newsletters or other communications to members. Affiliates are of course welcome at all national or state reunions. And they would be invited to join the network of Affiliates in seeking, recording, and preserving the history of the LCI ships and men in WW II.

Their first assignment would be to record and preserve their sponsor's history (this means you!) This would provide a valuable service and give the new members an opportunity to gain knowledge and confidence in a one-to-one setting. It would also provide a chance for that family member to learn more about you, and help you share your history first with your family, then with the Association and then with future generations. Once this initial task is completed, it's a good bet that this new Affiliate will want to locate some of your shipmates with whom you have lost con-



tact over the years. And remember, these younger generations have computer skills and can navigate the internet like you navigated the ocean. These skills place at their fingertips sources of information that make your head spin. They can find facts and people that you would not believe possible.

In 2003 in *Elsie Item* #46, I wrote an article entitled, "Let Your Light Shine On," urging you LCI veterans to record your stories. Write them down, tape record them, or discuss them on video tape. Do whatever it takes get them down. Some of you have already done that. I have a number of books and personal histories written by LCI sailors, and many stories have appeared in *Elsie Item* issues. But there are many untold stories out there, stories we need to fill in the gaps in LCI history and add the unique perspective that only you can provide. We need your stories.

Perhaps that prospective Affiliate member in your family might even accompany you to a national or state reunion. That would be a good start. Or you might honor them with a gift membership on the Fourth of July. And once they have recorded your history the rest is up to them. But it's a good bet, that your story will just whet their appetite to join the Affiliate ranks to preserve and pass on the history of the ships of iron and the men of steel. Make it happen!

## **ADD YOUR STORY TO LCI HISTORY!**

On the following pages, you will read the firsthand accounts of some of the courageous men who manned LCIs at Omaha Beach. Their stories are preserved here because LCI historian John France had the persistence to track down the men...and they were willing to share their stories.

### **WE NEED YOUR STORY ALSO!**

Don't let your experiences be lost to the coming generations. Historians Dennis Blocker and John France are waiting to hear from you and to help you record your story.

As you read the following accounts, we hope you will be motivated to pick up the phone, write or email Dennis or John to make arrangements for your story to be told. If you have already written your story, send it to them.

If your story concerns the Pacific area, contact:

**Dennis Blocker**  
2847 Cedar Plain  
San Antonio, TX 78245

If your story concerns the European/Atlantic area, contact:

**John France**  
11621 N. Copper Spring Trail  
Oro Valley, AZ 85737



## OUR FEATURE ARTICLE

# THE LCIs AT OMAHA BEACH: BATTLE REPORTS, PERSONAL STYLE

By

**John France,**

*USS LCI National Association Historian For the European Theater of Operations*

*Editor's Note:*

*We are proud to present here one of the first concrete examples of the excellent work that our recently-appointed LCI Historians are doing. You have read of the intensive effort to gather all known LCI photos from the National Archives. Now we have one of the most vivid, first-hand reports we have ever read due to the diligence and professional writing skills of Affiliate Member John France.*

*A letter from Patrick O'Donnell of LCI 487 started John off on his search for more surviving LCIers from that ship and others that participated in the landings on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. With persistence – and a bit of luck – John has been able to track down and record the recollections of many others from the 487, the 93 and other LCIs involved in that furious*

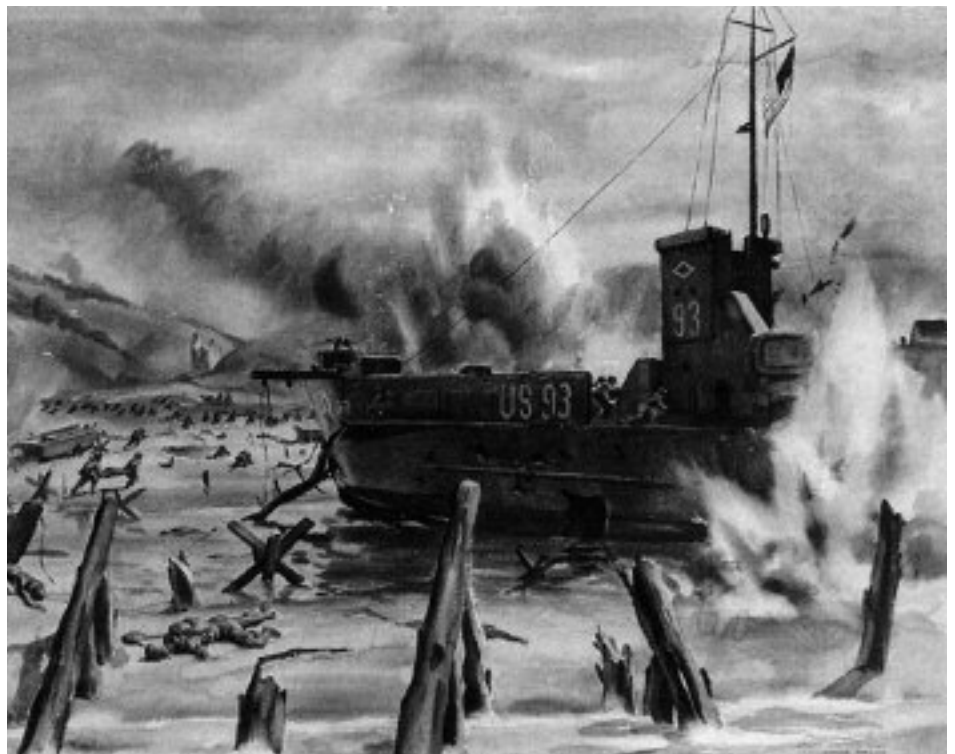
*action. Although we have covered the exploits of Flotilla 10, particularly of its U.S. Coast Guard component, in a previous issue, we had nothing to compare with the vivid, personalized accounts that John was able to get.*

*It is a classic of LCI history and we are glad to share it with you.*

## **LCI 487 Goes to War**

Six US Navy Landing Craft Infantry (LCIs) formed in columns off the Virginia coast on December 24th, 1943 for their journey to England – LCI(L)s 487, 488, 489, 490, 491 and 492. They were followed in January by LCIs 493, 494, 495, 496, 497 and 498. Their adventure into war had begun. Miraculously, all of the crewmen would survive the upcoming combat even though LCI(L) 497 would be destroyed by German teller mines at Omaha Beach. However, the experience of War would leave both vivid and haunting memories for all of them.

LCI 487(L) was typical in this Group of LCIs. It was newly built and the crew was young and inexperienced. The skipper – Lt. Stewart F. Lovell was the “Old Man” on board. Born in Manchester, New Hampshire, on May 26, 1907, he



*“The Tough Beach” by Dwight Shepler courtesy of [www.navsource.org](http://www.navsource.org)*



was 36 years old when he set sail on LCI(L) 487. Most of his crew was eighteen and nineteen year olds. His young crew gave their Skipper the nick name “Baggy Pants” because he did not acquire a proper fitting uniform after initially losing a lot of weight while onboard. The Executive Officer – Ensign James T. Clinton was nicknamed “Boy Scout” because he was pale, clean cut and did not drink or smoke.

As LCI(L) 487 sailed into the Atlantic on Christmas Day, Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Kennedy Coulter celebrated his 19th birthday. Born on Christmas Day, 1924 in Sumter, South Carolina, he wanted to be in the Army Air Corps but was drafted into the Navy. Originally trained in LCVPs at Solomons, Maryland, he was transferred to LCI(L) 487 in New York at Pier 42. He did not experience sea sickness during the upcoming voyage but he was concerned for the ship’s cook, Seaman 1st Class Thomas Scarmalis who got sea sick with any sniff of diesel fuel – “Not a good thing having your cook sea sick,”

BM2c Coulter was not the only “Holiday Baby” on board LCI 487(L). “Motor Mac” J.W. “Dub” Brown celebrated his 19th birthday on New Years Day, 1944, during a stopover at the Azores. Born in Atlanta, Georgia, he was raised on a farm and was mechanically inclined. He joined the Navy after receiving his draft notice. He was sworn in on March 25, 1943 and married his wife Doris on that same day. He went on to attend diesel schools in both Richmond and Detroit where he received his Motor Machinist Mate 2nd Class rating. Upon arriving at the Azores, LCI(L) 487’s Chief Motor Mac disembarked and returned to the States to attend Officer Candidate School. Consequently, “Dub” Brown received his First Class rating and became the boss of the “Black Gang” for the duration.

Coxswain Edward Siecienski of LCI(L) 487 was born in Masteth, Long Island, New York, on June 6, 1926. Other than being his birthday, June 6 held no historical significance for this seventeen year old – yet. At age sixteen he altered a copy of his birth certificate and lied about his age to enlist in the Navy. His older sister Anna reported him and he had to wait another year to enlist again with his mother signing for him in July, 1943. He labored through Boot Camp in Sampson, New York, and was then sent to Solomons, Maryland, by train. He had no idea where he was going or what the “Amphibs” were. At Solomons he was a “Poacher of Crabs & Fish”. He “acquired” some screening from underneath the barracks, attached a handle to it and used his new device to scoop up Blue Crabs. He shared his booty with cooks on the base who served up crab feasts. He joined LCI 487(L) in New York with the rest of the crew. They slept in barracks on the pier with the exception of one night when they sought refuge on the Battleship USS Texas because the barracks were full.

Gunners Mate 2nd Class Patrick O’Donnell was born in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania on April 19, 1924. He was working in a cigar factory when he received his draft notice. He quickly volunteered for the Navy, hoping to get an assignment on a battleship. To his dismay he was sent to Little Creek after graduating from boot camp. He was on his way to the “Amphibs” and LCI(L) 487. His battle station was with his friend Kennedy Coulter at # 1 Gun - 20MM on the bow. They would have a front row seat of things to come.

Seaman 1st Class Carl E. Spahr was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on May 21, 1924. Upon receiving his draft notice after graduating high school, he volunteered for the Navy. His brother Lloyd followed his foot steps a year later, also serving on an LCI but worlds apart in the Pacific. Carl successfully completed boot camp in Sampson, New York, then proceeded to Pier 42 in New York where he met his shipmates and his new home – LCI(L) 487.

One of the most entertaining crewmembers of LCI(L) 487 was Seaman 1st Class Robert St. John who was born in Germantown near Philadelphia on October 25, 1925. After an unsuccessful attempt to enlist at age 16, he managed to enlist in the Navy with the signature of his father at age 17 on July 10, 1943. He graduated from “Boots” at Sampson, New York and was assigned to the “Amphibs” after declining an offer to attend “Deep Sea Diving School.” He had a great sense of humor and was often singing “I want to buy a paper doll to call my own,” He sang so often that others would plead for him to stop. Now he was on his way to Falmouth, England – the land of Shore Leave, Fish & Chips, USO, warm beer and Spuds. They arrived January 19, 1944.

## **England—Joining the Battle-Tested “Coasties”**

After arriving in England, the twelve Navy “Round Conn” LCIs merged with twenty-four older “Square Conn” Coast Guard LCIs of Flotilla Four to form the new Flotilla Ten for the invasion of Normandy. The newer Navy LCIs bristled with five 20MM guns as compared to the Square Conns with their compliment of four 20MM guns. Unlike the untested Navy LCIers of this new Flotilla, the “Coasties” from Flotilla Four were combat veterans. 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 of Flotilla Four first arrived in Port Lyautey, French Morocco, on April 29, 1943. During the next few months they performed duties along the French African Coast and on July 9, 1943 they loaded troops at Bizerte, Tunisia and sailed for Sicily. They made their initial landings on the south coast of Sicily near Licata and Gela and were subjected to many bombings from the German Luftwaffe.



After General Patton captured Palermo, the Coasties moved into that harbor and transported troops of the Seventh Army to ports along the north Coast of Sicily in an attempt to block the retreating Germans from reaching Messina. In September, Flotilla Four transported troops from Bizerte to landing sites at Salerno, Italy and later rescued soldiers from those beaches after a vicious German counterattack. Flotilla Four's operations and heroics in the Mediterranean require volumes of documentation to do them justice. They even fought as they left that region when half of the LCI crews were granted Liberty at Gibraltar and sustained casualties in brawls with British Sailors. That ended any chance of the other half of "The Fighting Flotilla Four" to enjoy the hospitality of the "Rock". Bruised and certainly tested, Flotilla Four sailed towards England and sighted Lands End on October 28, 1943.

One of the crewmen of LCI(L) 93 of Flotilla Four was Seaman 1st Class Robert McCrory who was born near Prairieville, Louisiana on February 1, 1923. In October, 1942 he and his friend contemplated what to do regards to military service. His friend was one year older than Robert and he was expecting to be drafted soon. He definitely did not want to go into the Army. Robert was interested in joining the Navy and suggested that to his friend. They agreed to sign up in New Orleans but soon met another friend who had just graduated from Coast Guard boot camp. That buddy insisted that they would serve in the Caribbean on a Submarine Chaser if they enlisted in the Coast Guard. That sounded good to them so off they went to the Coast Guard recruiter. After completing boot Camp Harahan near New Orleans, they were asked to be "Volunteers" for the Amphibs; so much for Submarine Chasers in balmy waters. Seaman McCrory was off to LCI(L) 93 and parts unknown.

After completing training and practice landings on the Virginia coastline, the young Skipper of LCI(L) 93 gathered his crew for the "big speech". He informed them that the LCI was designed for only one operation and that only twenty percent of the crew was expected to survive. This left a lasting impression on McCrory and his shipmates. Shortly thereafter, LCIs Sam Hale and Frank Seth secretly painted "20%" on the side of the bridge and LCI(L) 93 sailed towards Africa. It did not take long for the Skipper to find out about the artwork and he was not amused. He quickly ordered Navy gray to be painted over the bright white numbers. This young, cigar chomping officer skippered LCI(L) 93 until shortly before the Normandy invasion when he was reassigned to another LCI. At that time, the Executive Officer of LCI(L) 93, Lt.(jg) Budd B. Bornhoft assumed command as Skipper. This was welcome news for McCrory who was not a proponent of the "20 Percent" theory.

## Enjoying the English

In England, Headquarters for the newly formed Flotilla 10 was established at "Greenway House", the summer home of the writer Agatha Christie. Carl Spahr of LCI(L) 487 had the fortune of attending meetings at Greenway House and was impressed by the extensive flower gardens on the estate. Otherwise, he lived on LCI(L) 487 and had little interaction with other LCI crews. Most LCIs lived in their own little world aboard ship and tended to keep with their fellow shipmates while on Liberty in places such as Torquay. A few of the LCIs including Robert McCrory of LCI(L) 93 and Robert St. John of LCI(L) 487 dated English maidens, much to the chagrin of the male British populace. LCIs enjoyed USO entertainment and local theatrical performances. English cuisine was scarce except for fish and chips and the ever present "spuds".

On April 16, 1944 Stewards Mate John N. Roberts transferred from LCI(L) 91 to LCI(L) 93. He was pleased with his new shipmates and they liked him in return. Seaman 1st Class McCrory described Roberts as "a really nice guy who would engage you in conversation when you were willing and would leave you alone when it looked like you needed some privacy". It is hard to imagine in this day and age the segregated military of the 1940s. There were few black combat units. Most blacks served in supporting roles as did John Roberts. However, on D-Day, he would share the same dangers as his white shipmates and German gunners would not discriminate.

Born in Natchitoches Parrish, Louisiana on November 1, 1924, John Roberts was working as a waiter in a night club in Alexandria when he was drafted. He attended basic training at Curtis Bay, Maryland from June 25, 1943 to July 29, 1943 and then proceeded to St. Augustine, Florida for Stewards training. He traveled to England on a transport and arrived there on January 27, 1944. He was assigned to LCI(L) 91 for the next two months.

While in England, LCIs endured V-1 "Buzz Bomb" attacks and bombings from the German Luftwaffe. Nearby Anti-Aircraft Artillery were fired by British female gunners who unwittingly caused injuries to sailors on LCI(L) 487. What goes up, must come down. During one air raid in Weymouth, Robert St. John and fellow LCI(L) 487 shipmates Yokum and Scarmalis huddled in gun tub # 4 as they watched the fireworks of the British AA gunners who attempted to shoot down attacking German bombers. Suddenly, both Yokum and Scarmalis were struck by shrapnel in the face and neck and St. John froze in disbelief that he too was not injured. Fortunately, the injuries to Yokum and Scarmalis were not life threatening.



## The Slapton Sands Debacle

During the few months before the invasion, the LCIs were engaged in training and practice beachings. One such exercise was "Operation Tiger" at Slapton Sands. On board LCI(L) 495 were VIPs including General Eisenhower, Admiral Wiltz and British Air Marshall Tedder. A bold MoMM2c Anthony Pelle got all their autographs. Then events turned tragic. The LCIs were horrified when German E-Boats audaciously slipped through the flotilla and torpedoed LSTs killing more than 700 American soldiers and sailors. The tragedy was kept from the American public for many years.

## Making Friends with the Army

During the training exercises, some of the LCIs befriended the soldiers on board. Coxswain Ed Siecienski felt sorry for the soldiers. Although the Big Red One swelled with new replacements, its core consisted of many veterans of the North Africa and Sicily campaigns. Many had already been awarded Purple Hearts for wounds received, some more than one. Siecienski would share with them the perils of the beaching, but the soldiers would have to endure countless more dangers as they fought their way towards Germany. Siecienski stole food for some of the Sergeants from the food locker of his officers. He had the key and perhaps "Baggy Pants" would not notice anything missing.

One of the new replacements for the 1st Infantry Division was William Heyward Messer of Florida. He was in Company K, 18th Regiment. LCI(L) 487 would carry him to Omaha Beach. Shortly before the invasion, he would celebrate the birth of his daughter with his fellow soldiers aboard LCI(L)487.

Sergeant Roland Ehlers was also aboard LCI(L)487 with his comrades of Company K. He had enlisted in the Army with his younger brother Walter on October 4, 1940. They had served together in Company K throughout North Africa and Sicily where Roland was wounded. After arriving in England to prepare for the Normandy invasion they were told that they would have to be assigned to separate units for the first time. The War Department was reluctant to have brothers serve together after the five Sullivan brothers were killed when their ship was torpedoed in the Pacific. Walter and Roland were told that the Army expected 50 percent casualties on the Normandy beaches. Roland remained in Company K and Walter was reassigned to Company L. Walter would sail to Normandy on another LCI(L).

## D-Day Arrives

On June 2, approximately 200 troops began boarding each of the LCIs of Flotilla 10 including the familiar Company K, 18th RCT of the 1st ID that climbed onto LCI(L) 487. In the past these soldiers had entertained Carl Spahr by stripping off their shirts and wailing at each other in no holds barred boxing matches. Now Spahr and his shipmates noted that the soldiers were quiet and busied themselves with cleaning weapons, checking gear and reading paperback books. For the most part, the soldiers gave no indication that they were nervous or fearful of what was to come. However, one familiar Army cook approached S1c St. John and offered him an ornate plate that he had been carrying since the North African Campaign. The soldier told St. John that he wanted him to have the plate because he believed that he was not going to survive the invasion. St. John argued with the soldier telling him his premonition was nonsense and that he should keep his plate. However, the soldier insisted that St. John take it and the LCIer finally relented.

The soldiers endured horrible weather and rough seas onboard the LCIs for several days including the aborted invasion on June 5. Seasickness was rampant and many soldiers suffered greatly. Finally, General Eisenhower gave the order to proceed with the invasion after meteorologists advised him of a likely short break in the foul weather. Thus the great armada of thousands of ships of all sizes sailed for the French Coast on the evening of June 5, 1944. Flotilla Ten, thirty-six LCIs strong sailed together in columns towards Normandy until a designated place where one column of twelve "Coastie" LCIs split from the rest of the Flotilla and joined other LCIs sailing for Utah beach. The unlucky remainder of Flotilla Ten consisting of twelve "Coastie" LCIs and twelve Navy LCIs continued towards Omaha Beach where they would face extreme violence from the German defenders.

## Leading the Way at Omaha Beach

The first LCI(L)s to land troops on Omaha Beach were Navy LCI(L) 493 and Coast Guard LCI(L) 88 from Flotilla Ten at 0735 hours. Within the hour, Coast Guard LCI(L)s 90, 91, 94, 92, 83, 85 and 89 of Flotilla Ten would also land troops under withering artillery and small arms fire. In addition some would strike mines as they plowed through the beach obstacles. LCI(L)s 91 and 92 would be so damaged that they could not be retracted from the beach and LCI(L) 85 would sink after carrying casualties off shore to an awaiting ship. The destruction of these three LCIs came with great loss of life.

Waiting for her turn to enter the maelstrom was



“Coastie” LCI(L) 93 of Flotilla Ten. At approximately 0945 hours, she plowed through the obstacles of Easy Red Sector of Omaha Beach and dropped her ramps. Soldiers of the veteran 1st Infantry Division including 166 from Company I, and 37 from Company M of the 18th Regiment began to scramble down into the waist deep water. Manning the starboard ramp winch, Seaman 1st Class Robert McCrory observed that there was no artillery fire directed at LCI(L) 93 but several soldiers descending the ramps were struck down by small arms fire. During this calamity, a soldier approached McCrory at the ramp and asked him if he had seen his rifle. Seaman McCrory was puzzled by the ridiculous question and answered “no”. He then saw the soldier disappear aft into the crowd of awaiting soldiers. Shortly thereafter, one of the LCIs found that same soldier hiding below deck in the crew quarters. Stewards Mate John Roberts who was standing on the Well Deck was instructed to bring the name of the soldier to the Skipper. When Lt.(jg) Budd B. Bornhoft was presented with the hapless soldier, Seaman First Class McCrory was amazed at what he overheard. The soldier refused to get off the ship and fight with his comrades. McCrory had landed countless soldiers on many beaches in the Mediterranean but had never witnessed a soldier refuse to fight. The soldier was unmoved by the warnings of the LCI Skipper and insisted that he would not get off the ship. Lt. (jg) Bornhoft was a very busy man at the time. He asked for volunteers to retrieve the brave wounded soldiers at the base of his ramps. Seaman 1st Class McCrory, Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Glenn Nichols and other shipmates answered the call and carried several soldiers to safety. Bornhoft then retracted LCI(L) 93 off the beach and headed for the transport Samuel B. Chase to pick up another load of soldiers and deliver his mutinous soldier to proper authority.

Upon arriving at the Samuel B. Chase, LCI(L) 93 picked up a double load of soldiers – standing room only including members of the 453rd Amphibious Truck Company, 5th Special Brigade. The mutinous soldier was presented to an Army Colonel who told him that he would have to return to the beach with LCI(L) 93, find his unit and fight with them. Once again, the soldier insisted that he would not go to the beach and the Colonel could do anything he wanted to do with him. The soldier was finally taken aboard the transport ship to an awaiting unknown destiny. In the meantime, thousands of brave men advanced towards the beach. Scared or not, they would prevail that day.

LCI(L) 93 was held up temporarily on her return trip to the beach to watch five Navy Destroyers line up bow to stern and deliver a rapid fire broadside to the German fortifications above Omaha. After the impressive fireworks, one of the recently boarded Army Engineers asked Seaman 1st Class McCrory about the conditions

on the beach. McCrory responded that it “was hot” on the beach. The Engineer assured McCrory that according to the plan, the beach would be under control by the time they landed. Amazed, McCrory told the soldier that “It was not going according to plan”.

In the meantime, LCI(L) 487 made their run to the Easy Red Sector of Omaha Beach with 36 soldiers of Company M and 167 soldiers of Company K, 18th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, including the replacement officer - 1st Lt. William Messer and the combat veteran Sgt. Roland Ehlers. On the way to the beach, a critical error was made when the stern anchor was dropped too late; it dragged mere yards behind the LCI. There would be no way to winch off the beach.

## **The Courageous Anchor Man**

As the 487 dropped her ramps, Coxswain Class Edward Sciecienski ran forward from his station at #2 Gun and descended the ramp with the “Man Rope” that would assist the heavily laden soldiers. He was concentrating on stretching the line to the beach and falling on the small anchor to draw the line tight so that the soldiers would have something to hold on to as they struggled through the surf. As he pushed through the cold waves, he quickly discarded the Thompson .45 caliber Sub Machinegun that was impeding his forward motion. Amidst the thunder of artillery and mortar rounds he threw himself onto the anchor on the beach. He was not thinking that June 6 was his eighteenth birthday. His thoughts were whether he would survive the day.

Behind him huddled around #1 Gun on the bow of LCI(L) 487 were Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Kennedy Coulter and Gunners Mate 3rd Class Patrick O’Donnell. Coulter was wearing head sets and was to report observations to the bridge. He was looking down at the first soldiers scrambling down the port ramp when an artillery or mortar round struck amidst them. Horrified, he reported the casualties. 1st Lt. Messer, the new father and replacement officer was killed instantly; he earned his Combat Infantry Badge with a few steps down the ramp. Others suffered mortal wounds including Sgt. Roland Ehlers who had already worn a Purple Heart and had endured three major campaigns in three years with his brother Walter.

More artillery rounds slammed into both sides of the bow of LCI(L) 487. Coulter identified a bunker and gun emplacement on the hillside and asked for permission to engage it with his 20MM. The request was denied. The first artillery strike on the bow knocked O’Donnell to the deck breaking his thumb. As he got back to his feet, he watched as the troops descended the only remaining usable ramp on the starboard side. Meanwhile, Sciecienski was still lying on top of the



“Man Rope” anchor on the beach. As the artillery and mortar rounds crashed around him the casualties mounted. He had eleven wounded and three dead soldiers surrounding him. When the last soldiers had passed by him, Siecienski pulled himself up and dashed back to his LCI.

Having found shelter on board LCI(L) 487, Coxswain Edward Siecienski was dismayed to find out that once again he had to face the fire on the beach. Faced with no means to winch off the beach, a rapidly falling tide, a sand bar to block them and artillery rounds punching holes in his ship, Skipper “Baggy Pants” Lovell informed Siecienski that he should abandon ship with ? of the crew and seek shelter on the beach or escape on other landing craft. “Baggy Pants” would remain on board with some of the crew and try to refloat LCI(L) 487 at the next high tide. Motor Machinist Mate 1st Class Johnson W. “Bud” Brown had insisted that the holes in the bow could be patched and LCI(L) 487 could be refloated. Brown did not want to lose his ship and he was very concerned for the mounting number of wounded soldiers who were being brought onboard.

While the drama unfolded on LCI(L) 487, The Skipper of LCI(L) 93 Budd Bornhoft negotiated the obstacles towards the beach. With orders not to stop and lend assistance to anyone, they passed an LCVP with dead and wounded hanging over the gunnels. LCI(L) 93 managed to slip over a sand bar in the rapidly falling tide and advance another twenty yards before the ramps were lowered. It struck a mine aft and the starboard engine was thrown against the port engine. The explosion resulted in panic among some of the Combat Engineers with no combat experience.

Aboard LCI 93 Gunners Mate 3rd Class Byron Spalding ran down the ramp, anchor in hand determined to get the “Man Rope” stretched to the beach as fast as he could. Having completed his task with mortar rounds exploding nearby, he scurried back on board in record time. He later declared “I could walk on water!” The soldiers then began descending the ramps into a storm of small arms and mortar fire. Some who panicked began jumping over the side. Seaman 1st Class Robert McCrory and Quartermaster 3rd Class Aven Templeton who were manning the starboard ramp winch did their best to help the soldiers inflate their life belts before jumping overboard. Those who did not inflate their belts were dragged under the waves by their heavy loads. McCrory did not see them resurface. Finally, McCrory and Templeton were pushed aside by the frantic soldiers moving towards the ramps. McCrory then received a temporary reprieve from the horror when a projectile slammed into his helmet knocking him unconscious.

## **Abandon Ship!**

Back on LCI(L) 487, the crew began to abandon ship. Some heard the order to abandon ship, and others merely followed those who had heard the order. All saw LCI(L) 93 which was landing troops a mere 100 yards to port as their potential savior. They strapped a life jacket onto shipmate MoMM2c T.V. Nesmith. He was nervous because he could not swim and he had been previously torpedoed while serving on another ship. His shipmates tossed him overboard then followed him off the port side of the Fantail. BM2c Kennedy Coulter found the water to be over his head. He stayed in the water all the way to LCI(L)93. Others found their own route. S1c Carl Spahr made his way to the water’s edge then followed it to LCI(L) 93 because he was concerned with mines. Coxswain Edward Siecienski made his way to the 93 through beach obstacles. He covered the distance 2/3 on sand bar and 1/3 in the water. GM3c Patrick O’Donnel elected to run along the beach. This was probably not the best choice because he ran a gauntlet of machine gun fire, tossing his Thompson Sub Machine gun aside to lessen his load. Coxswain Harry Mailahn who was running behind O’Donnel later told him that it appeared the machine gun rounds were kicking up sand between his feet.

## **A Wild Track Meet on the Beach**

All told, at least sixteen sailors from LCI(L) 487 made the wild dash for LCI(L) 93. The flight had immediate consequences for both LCIs. The German artillerymen who observed the flight of the LCIs ceased fire on the abandoned LCI(L) 487 and trained their guns on LCI(L) 93. When the first Navy LCIs arrived at “Coastie” LCI(L) 93, there were approximately twenty-five soldiers still waiting to disembark from the ship.

When Coxswain Edward Siecienski arrived at the ramp of LCI(L) 93, he believed that it was his duty to report to the “Coastie” Skipper that he and other refugee LCIs were boarding his ship. He was directed to the Conn and he waited for a Stewards Mate to descend the ladder so that he could ascend and report to the Skipper. The Stewards Mate was John Roberts who had just received instructions from his Skipper Lt.( jg) Bornhoft to relay information to the engine room. Communications had been knocked out and the Skipper wanted Roberts to order engines full astern in an attempt to back over the sand bar created by the rapid falling tide.





## A Severely Wounded Shipmate

Just as Roberts cleared the ladder, Siecienski began to climb it. Suddenly, there was an explosion as an artillery round penetrated the bulkhead below Roberts. Siecienski looked down and saw that the Stewards Mate had his right leg hit. Boatswains Mate 2nd Class Abbot who was recently assigned to LCI(L) 93 as an additional Pharmacist Mate immediately came to Robert's assistance applying a tourniquet and administering first aid. Siecienski jumped off the ladder to help Abbot. Not only had the Stewards Mate lost much of his right leg, he had also received painful shrapnel wounds to his left leg. Siecienski assumed that the Stewards Mate was Catholic when he saw him clutching Rosary Beads in his hand. Roberts never lost consciousness throughout his ordeal. Abbot clearly saved Robert's life. He remained with Roberts until he could get him to a surgeon.

## The 93 Takes a Pounding

When Seaman 1st Class Carl Spahr climbed aboard LCI(L) 93, he was told to deliver a telephone to the Conn. However, he was met by a wounded "Coastie" helmsman who staggered out of the Pilot House and asked him to take the helm. Spahr did so wondering what to do next alone at the helm. He could see that two artillery rounds had already passed through the Pilot House and it did not appear that LCI(L) 93 was going anywhere. While looking out a porthole, he saw a puff of smoke emit from a bunker on the hillside and watched in horror as he followed the contrail of the artillery round from the gun to LCI(L) 93. The LCI shuddered as it was struck with the solid shot. He watched subsequent rounds fired from the same gun which slammed into the "Coastie" LCI. All he could think was "I hope the Destroyers get that son of a bitch!" In fact he saw an effort by the US Navy to do just that but the German gun survived. All told, LCI(L) 93 took at least ten hits from large caliber artillery rounds. LCI(L) 93 Skipper Budd Bornhoft decided that it was at least time to remove some of the sailors off his ship.

A small LCM was called in to remove his guests from LCI(L) 487 and the wounded. They were taken to the Destroyer *Doyle* where cold, weak and wet they were lifted aboard in baskets. Once below deck, Coxswain Siecienski heard loud explosions and thought that *Doyle* was being hit. He ran topside to find out that he had been below a five inch gun that was making all the noise. It was engaging German fortifications on the bluffs. He could clearly see Germans running near Pill Boxes, disappearing in and out of sight as they ran through the trenches. *Doyle* was so close to shore that he was sure that it would run aground. GM2c Patrick O'Donnell also returned topside to watch the

action. He helped toss spent 5 inch casings overboard as *Doyle* pounded the Germans.

## Not Dead Yet!

When Seaman 1st Class Robert McCrory regained consciousness, he was alone on the bow. He did not know how long he was out. He knew nothing about the LCIs from the 487 who had boarded his ship and the LCM that had retrieved them. He staggered back towards the fantail where shipmates were seeking shelter from the artillery rounds that were concentrated on the forward part of the ship. Along the way he saw a thick trail of blood that led to the pathetic crumpled body of his friend BM2c Glenn Nichols. Upon arriving at the fantail, he sought shelter behind an ammunition box with Gunners Mate 3rd Class Byron Spalding. Spalding pointed to a large dent in McCrory's helmet and declared that he should be dead. When the firing subsided, McCrory walked forward along the deck and recovered an Army blanket to cover the body of his friend Glenn Nichols. While placing the blanket over Nichols, McCrory was shocked when the "body" groaned "I'm not dead yet you son of a bitch!" He had five pieces of shrapnel in his throat. Surgeons would later leave two of the pieces of shrapnel inside him for fear that they would cause more damage in the process of removing them.

## Destroyers to the Rescue

After hours stranded on the beach, Lt.(jg) Budd Bornhoft realized that his LCI(L) 93 was finished. His Executive Officer, John J. O'Conner was one of the severely wounded. There was much flooding below and the LCI was shot to pieces. Even if they could move, a sandbar blocked their escape. He signaled two Destroyers, USS *Doyle* and USS *Emmons* and asked for help. *Doyle* which had earlier received LCIs from the LCM sent a whale boat to assist. *Emmons* asked for volunteers to do the same and it too sent a gig and a whale boat. Skipper Bornhoft ordered the crew to abandon ship. S1c Robert McCrory was the first over the side and they lowered his wounded friend Glenn Nichols to him. McCrory towed Nichols out to the awaiting *Emmons* whaleboat.

The deck log of USS *Emmons* states that at 1633 hours, the gig returned with six wounded and eighteen more were recovered in another small boat. Seventeen were "Coasties" from LCI(L) 93, three were sailors from LCI(L) 487 and the remaining four were probably four wounded soldiers reported "removed with crew" by Skipper Budd Bornhoft. USS *Doyle* reported rescuing a total of thirty-seven crewmembers of LCI(L) 93 and LCI(L) 487.

That was the end of LCI(L) 93 but not of LCI(L) 487.



For approximately twelve hours, the remaining crew of LCI(L) 487 patched up their ship and awaited another high tide for a chance to extract from the beach. MoMM1c Johnson “Bud” Brown and his shipmates stuffed mattresses into the holes left by artillery rounds in the bow. The Pharmacist Mates tended feverishly to the wounded only to watch them die one by one on deck during the long day. S1c Robert St. John sadly discovered that the Army Cook who had predicted his own death and had given St. John the ornate plate from Africa was one of the soldiers who succumbed to his wounds on the deck.

Finally, relief from the horrors of June 6 came for the remaining crewmen of LCI(L) 487 in the evening at high tide when “Baggy Pants” ordered full astern. MoMM1c “Bud” Brown felt LCI(L) 487 “bounce off the sandbar” and return to the open seas.

The LCI(L) 487 crewmen who had made the wild dash to LCI(L) 93 were reunited with their shipmates and their LCI the following day. Most of the survivors from LCI(L) 93 would spend weeks in a Survivors Camp in England wearing an odd collection of clothes and footwear acquired on USS *Doyle* and USS *Emmons*. The unlucky Robert McCrory received only a pair of rubber goulashes and a denim coat from a sailor on USS *Emmons*. He remained in his filthy clothes for weeks. At the survivor’s camp the Red Cross gave him a little denim bag containing a plastic razor with no blade, a small tube of toothpaste and a toothbrush that fell apart the first time he used it. McCrory has been “proud of the Red Cross ever since”.

However, it was the wounded who suffered most. Stewards Mate John N. Roberts spent six weeks in pain in England at the 83rd General Hospital and then sailed to the United States where he remained in the Navy Hospital in Philadelphia until he was discharged from the Coast Guard on January 27, 1945.

## **Gallant Soldiers Fight On**

The soldiers who were delivered to the beach by Navy and Coast Guard fought on. After a day long fight to the top of the bluffs, Walter Ehlers searched for his brother Roland only to be told that Roland was “Missing in Action”. Although concerned for his older brother, Walter soldiered on, leading his squad to the best of his ability. On June 9, near Goville, France, he successfully spearheaded attacks against two German machinegun nests and two mortar positions, personally killing many of the enemy. On the following day, his squad covered for the withdrawal of his platoon and then he personally covered for the withdrawal of his squad. Although wounded himself, he killed the sniper who had shot him and then carried to safety his wounded automatic rifleman. Incredibly, he then ran back

under fire to retrieve the Browning Automatic Rifle that he was not able to carry out with the wounded soldier. After having his wound treated, he refused to be evacuated and remained with his men. Weeks later in July, he received an unexpected visitor. It was his brother Roland’s Company Commander who gave Walter the devastating news that Roland was killed on Omaha Beach while descending the ramp of an LCI.

On December 14, 1944, Walter Ehlers was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions June 9 and 10, 1944. People would refer to him as “hero” and rightfully so. However, Walter grieved for his older brother Roland who had always looked out for him. Roland was Walter’s hero.

Somewhere in Florida, a young wife grieved for her husband William Heyward Messer. He was listed as “Missing in Action” and remains so today. Somewhere is the daughter who never knew her father, the young Lieutenant killed along with Roland Ehlers while descending the ramp of LCI(L) 487.

## **Authors Notes:**

*I want to thank the surviving LCIs of this story and Walter Ehlers and his son David for their patience and invaluable input. I want to thank Thomas Lofton of the D Day Museum in New Orleans and Iola Williams of the African American Military Museum in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for helping me find John Roberts of LCI 93. I want to thank Scott T. Price, Historian for U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Andrew Woods, Research Historian for the Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center, Catigny First Division Foundation and Edwin Hoffman of the USS Emmons Association who all provided critical information for this report. In my research I constantly referred to “Omaha Beachhead” published by the War Department Historical Division September 20, 1945 which is available through the U.S. Government Printing Office and “Omaha Beach” by Joseph Balkoski published by Stackpole Books, 2004. I highly recommend both books.*





*Author John France joins his parents and brothers at the Ohio LCI Reunion.  
Seated (l to r) Mother, Mrs. Rita France; brother, David; father Frank (LCI 540); Standing, John France; brother Eric.*

### **About the Author:**

*John France resides in Oro Valley, Arizona, where he serves as an Area Supervisor for the U.S. Border Patrol. "Chasing bad guys up and down mountains and across the desert!" says John. His father, Frank, served aboard LCIs 540 and 829*



Every once in a while some photos come in that just have to be shared! Here are some that, though of just one LCI sailor, will, we know, call up all sorts of memories for the rest of us! Yeah—I remember doing that!

George Weber, who now resides in Sacramento, California, was an Indiana boy who did his time as a radio operator on the staff of the Commander of LCI(R) Flotilla 16 in the Pacific. Here are some of the great photos he shared with us along with his comments.



**“Fresh out of Boot Camp— ‘nuff said!”**

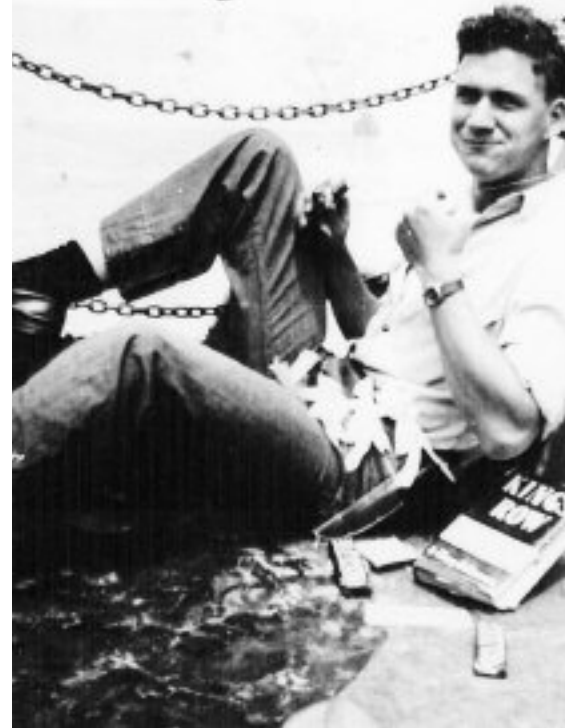


**“Honolulu 1944. For a fee you could pose with a good-looking girl thus getting to hug her for a short time!”**



**“Sometimes you unexpectedly ran into a buddy from home. Here’s Charlie Schull, a fellow Hoosier I found in San Diego.”**

**“Working hard on LCI 762! A venture into comedy, with me reading King’s Row, munching Clark’s candy bars and cutting out paper dolls! Humor helped a person get through Naval rigmarole.”**



# George Weber Goes to War!

## "The Way We Were—and Are"



*"Eating hurriedly during a brief rest stop between loading rockets into the deck launchers."*

*"...and me today holding Eileen, one of my great grandchildren."*



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If you served aboard an LCI, you are eligible to join our Association as a regular member.  
If you are a relative of someone who served aboard an LCI or if you just have a desire to have a part in remembering those who so served, you are invited to join as an Affiliate.

DUES ARE \$25.00 PER YEAR, June 1 through May 31.

Please complete this form and mail it to the address indicated below with your first year's dues.

## I. For Application as a Regular Member:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
LCI Served On \_\_\_\_\_ Rank/Rate \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation or Former Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Help, please! As a precaution we'd like to have an alternate name and address that we might contact in case we can't reach you:**

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_

## II. For Application as an Affiliate:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_  
My \_\_\_\_\_ (father, grandfather, uncle, etc.) whose name is/was \_\_\_\_\_  
served on LCI Number \_\_\_\_\_ (If unknown or if you did not have a relative who served on an LCI, leave blank)  
My Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's name \_\_\_\_\_

**Help, please! As a precaution we'd like to have an alternate name and address that we might contact in case we can't reach you:**

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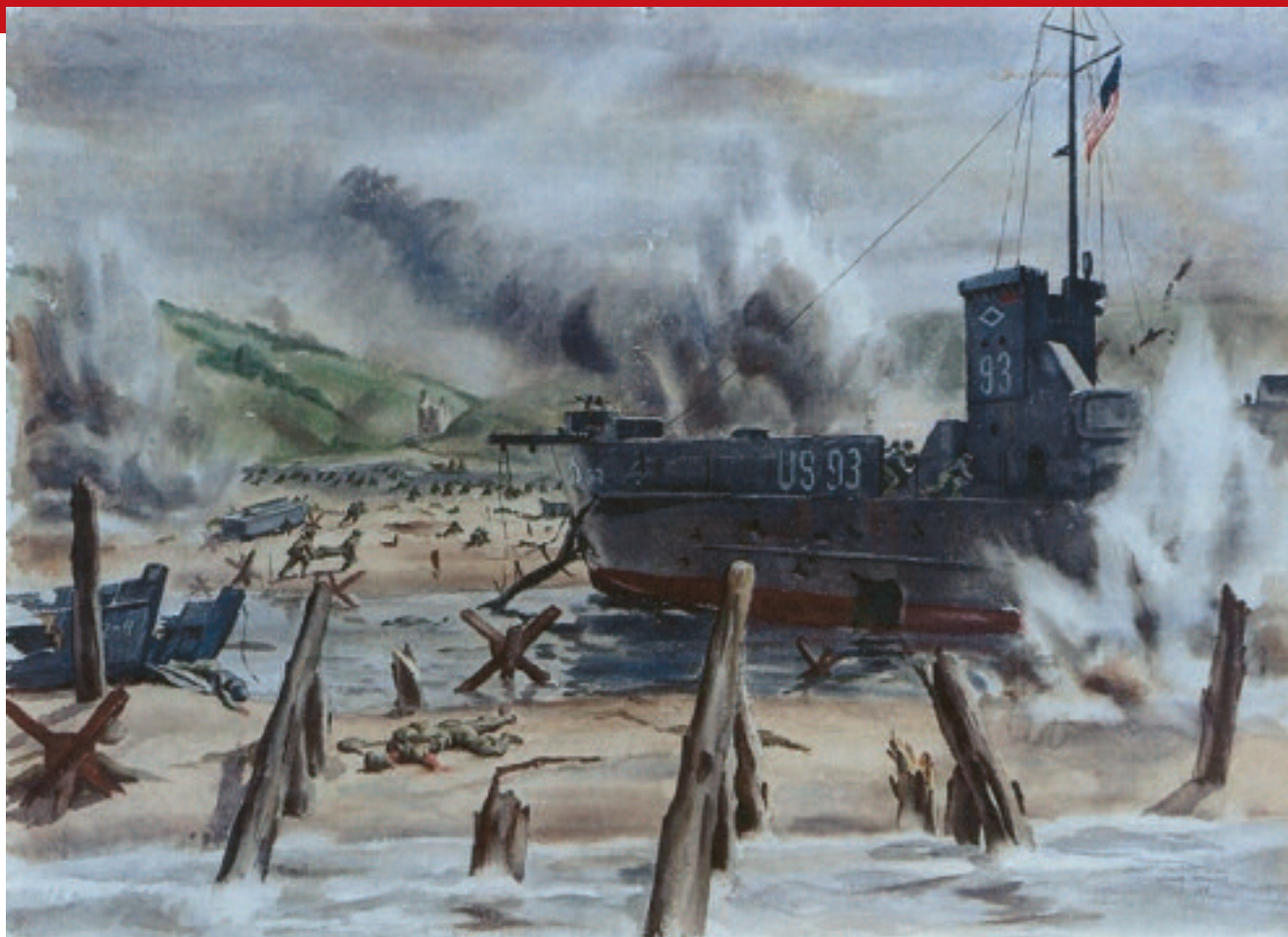
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*"The Tough Beach" by Dwight Shepler courtesy of [www.navsource.org](http://www.navsource.org)*