

LCS(L)-73 SERVICE

The main purpose of the Landing Craft Support, Large, LCS(L), was to provide fire-power support to the troops as they stormed ashore and to intercept inter-island barge traffic. The LCS(L)s would be close behind the landing craft, and their rockets would be fired over the men's heads into the enemy locations. They could then turn and run parallel to the beach, firing on enemy positions. They were capable of dropping anchor a couple hundred feet from shore, running up on the beach, then pulling themselves out with the anchor. This was rarely done and the *LCS(L)-73* never did this in battle, only in practice in California.

The keel was laid 15 Dec. 1944 at the Albina Engine and Machine Works, Astoria, OR. She was launched on 16 January 1945, and commissioned on 19 February 1945. Thus, it was barely over 1 month for its construction. It was eventually sold to The Learner Company, Alameda, CA, 8 Jan 1951 for \$8,156 (probably for scrap).

The timing of the war meant that most of the time *LCS(L)-73* was in the Pacific, was after the official end of the war. They left the USA in April 1945, the war ended in September 1945, and the ship returned to the USA in August of 1946. Thus, she was away almost one year after the Japanese surrendered, and a total time of about 16 months.

The ship had six officers CO, XO, Engineering Officer, Gunnery Officer, Communications Officer, First Lieutenant (ran the ship and deck crews, etc) and a crew of 65. Lt Prichard Carlton, from North Carolina was the first Commanding Officer. The ship had radar which was mounted on a mast attached to the conning tower. The ship also had 10 Mark 7 rocket launchers, each of which held 12 rockets for a total of 120, and several guns. The original crew was on the ship the whole time it was away, with only a couple of changes. No men were lost in the fighting.

After commissioning, the 73 made a shake-down cruise to San Diego, CA where she stayed for several weeks, some minor repairs were made, and they did some LCS(L) training. Then, about April 1945, the ship headed to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and then on to Okinawa. They patrolled that general area of the Pacific. Except for some short trips when it was alone, *LCS(L)-73* travelled with several other ships, including at least one bigger ship.

The ship was attacked by Kamikazes off Okinawa. LT (jg) Paul Weber, the Communications Officer had a close call during one kamikaze attack. He reported that he was on deck and a Japanese plane got so close he could see the face of the pilot. They looked at each other, and the pilot turned the plane to miss the ship and crashed into the water.

There were no MRE's in those days; they had a refrigeration system and a large freezer on board. They got their supplies from shore bases, but also sometimes contacted bigger ships in the area and asked for supplies. If you needed some beef, you might get a couple sides of beef.

The ship had a desalination plant on board to provide their fresh water. It did not make a lot of water and the men were allowed one shower a week. If you needed one sooner, you took a salt water shower then a quick rinse with fresh water.

After the war ended (September 2, 1945), Lt Carlton had enough points to go home, and left fairly soon. LT (jg) Paul Weber, from Iowa, who had been the Communications and Supply Officer, was made commanding officer and served in that role until the ship returned to the states.

The ship spent some time around Nagasaki protecting a Japanese base to keep them from coming back into it. It also docked at Hiroshima. The men were told they all would likely be sterile from the radiation exposure; that did not turn out to be true.

After the war ended, one of the 73's tasks was to search for and destroy mines with its guns. Most ships doing this were wood which did not trip the mines' magnetic triggers. But the LCS(L)s were constructed of steel which made the task more hazardous. The ship frequently entered the Yangtze River in China, at night under conditions of poor visibility, as the river was clear of mines. The ship lost an anchor one night in rough seas; they had to circle until morning when the crew could get the spare anchor attached. Another time she had to ride out a typhoon, which bounced them around severely, but the 73 came through it without any problems.

Another post-war task in Shanghai, China was to go up the Yangtze River and pick up three or four American bodies. These were taken to a larger ship.

It took about a month to return to the US, and they arrived in August 1946. LT (jg) Paul Weber returned home and LT (jg) Wally Storm from South Dakota took over as commanding officer.

LT (jg) Paul Weber reported that when the ship returned back to Astoria, OR, it carried three or four Japanese officer prisoners with them. This seems strange, given that it was a year after the war ended, but he does recall several details about it.