

USS LSM-323

LSM - Landing Ship Medium

HISTORY

LSM 323 was laid down 18 May 1944 at the Pullman Standard Car Manufacturing Company in Chicago, Illinois and launched ninety days later on 11 August 1944. The following month, on 16 September 1944, she was commissioned in the shipyards at Calumet Harbor in South Chicago and received by her five officers and a crew of 48 enlisted men in Lake Michigan at Navy Pier.

Under the command of Lieutenant, jg, James C. Watt, Jr., USNR, the LSM 323 sailed down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where she completed her outfitting of a conning tower, mast pole, antennas, etc. She then preceded to Gulf Port, Mississippi and loaded some Letourneau's and some big telephone poles destined for Pearl Harbor. She then passed through the Panama Canal to San Diego and thence to Pearl Harbor where the crew picked up 6 heavy tanks and 50 Marines in preparation for the D-Day landing on Iwo Jima. On 19 February 1945, during the assault and occupation of Operation Iwo Jima, Lt. Benjamin A. Hamm USMCR, commanded the unloading of tanks, and troops, from LSM 323 on Blue Beach 1. Five Marine casualties were taken aboard.

While LSM 323 was withdrawing from Iwo Jima, her port engine was hit and rendered ineffective by an enemy shell. *(See account from ship's log with picture at right.)*



*USN photo taken from another ship
Information below copied from
LSM-323 log:
24 February 1945*

D-Day (1024) Anchor aweigh - All ahead full-headed back in the direction of line of departure.

D-Day (1025) Engine room reported port engine hit – sent damage control party to investigate. Reported 10” hole 8” above waterline on port side. Port main engine had #14 cylinder head and exhaust elbow cracked. Exhaust manifold was torn open so that cooling water was escaping. Had to secure port engine at (1027).
No casualties in personnel.

Along with other damaged ships, LSM 323 limped down to Guam on just one engine at approximately 3 knots. As a result, LSM 323 missed the Okinawa invasion and went directly to the Philippines to practice for the landing on Japan. However, the United States conducted atomic bombings against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the first on 6 August



LSM 323 and Lt. Watt on a Philippine beach

1945 and the second on 9 August 1945, and Japan surrendered.

Shortly thereafter, the LSM 323 was called upon to ferry Army of Occupation troops from Luzon, Philippine Islands to the Japanese mainland. After making two trips to Japan and encountering a typhoon off Okinawa, Lt. James C. Watt had enough points to return home in December 1945.

LSM 323 was decommissioned 20 May 1946 and sold 12 August 1947 to the Norfolk, Baltimore & Carolina Line (N.B.C. Line) of Norfolk, Virginia. In that transaction, she was renamed “Edward Hogshire” for the father of the founder of the N.B.C. Line. The Edward Hogshire served East Coast ports until 1968. Her final disposition is uncertain; however, her last record reflects that she was resold to an unnamed Panamanian Registry.



PHOTOGRAPHS



LSM 323 crew and officers in the Philippines



Landing on the Philippines with curious locals to meet them



54 years later – Officers from LSM 323 Ralph R. David and James C. Watt along with crewmember James W. Johnston hold the ship's original 48-star flag. As was the custom, the flag was presented to the ship's commanding officer, Lt. Watt, after the ship was passed to the next commander.



Lt. James Watt & wife Jane