

Contributed by Denis Murray  
for his father Peter Murray Quartermaster USS LCI(L)-215

# **WAR DIARY**

## **USS LCI(L) 215**



# Preface

The fall of France and the British evacuation of Dunkirk showed that any war by the United States against Germany would have to be carried out on entirely different lines from those of World War I, when we were able to use the excellent terminal facilities of French harbors. The implications of this, tremendous and far reaching, were not immediately realized. The United States Army embarked on a large field gun and tank building program without considering how these and other vehicles necessary in modern war were to be landed on coasts held by the enemy. Even President Roosevelt, so quick to apprehend needed changes in naval warfare, remarked to his Naval Aide, early in 1942, that he considered special tank landing craft to be a mistake. "Freighters are much easier to build."

Admiral Joseph M. Reeves, the former Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet was largely responsible for bringing this important problem to the attention of the high command. In a memorandum to the Chief of Naval Operations dated 24 February 1942 he declared:-

"There are building in this country a great number of tanks without adequate means of transporting them to the theater of war. This task is more complicated than is at first apparent. It involves more than the mere transportation of the tanks overseas. It includes the more difficult problem of landing them on a hostile shore. In such an offensive campaign it is unlikely that there will be available open ports and harbors with docking and hoisting facilities. Large numbers of tanks, especially in the first stages of the campaign, will have to be landed against opposition on hostile beaches. *A special type of landing craft is required for this operation.*"

The Royal navy had ordered the construction of about 200 Landing Ships Tanks in the United States in January of 1942. Landing ships and craft were given Number One priority over destroyer escorts, aircraft carriers and everything else in May of 1942. Such high priority was given to the building of these types of ships that the keel of an aircraft carrier that had already been laid was removed from a dry dock and three LSTs were built in its place.

Three new types of Landing Craft were

devised. The Tank Landing Craft (LCT) and the larger, longer-legged Tank Landing Ship (LST) were designed to handle the bigger, heavier, tanks and self-propelled guns coming into service. A similar craft was needed to carry large forces of infantry across wide bodies of water and land them directly on an invasion beach. To meet this need, the Infantry Landing Craft (Large), or LCI(L) was developed. In the terminology of the time, it was called a "craft" rather than "ship", since it was not expected to be able to make long voyages on its own; rather, the plan was to build LCI(L)s in sections, ship them to the theater of operations, and assemble them there.

This new landing craft was 158½ feet in length, 23 foot beam with a mean draft of 3'1½". Landing draft was 2'8" forward, 4'10" aft. Loaded draft was 5'4" forward, 5'11" aft. Eight G.M. Diesels divided into two sets drove twin variable-pitch propellers to give her a top speed of 16 knots; she had a "ferry" range of 4,000 miles at 12 knots, and when loaded for beaching, could steam 1,500 miles at that speed. Her appearance was unique; she had a high, "slab-sided" midship wheelhouse and a pair of bow gangways, one on either side of her sharp bow. When landing troops the LCI(L) beached herself, her gangways would be sent forward and then lowered to the beach. She was then ready to land the 199 men she was capable of carrying.

Preliminary design work was completed in one month in mid-1942 and by that October the first LCI was launched. The designers had worked better than they knew. Never designed to make ocean crossings, the new craft proved quite seaworthy. The "takedown" feature was not needed, and LCIs crossed Atlantic and Pacific alike under their own power. The LCIs design stressed ruggedness and ease of mass production. The "ruggedness" part was forcefully demonstrated to Vice Admiral (then Captain) Daniel Barbey, who wrote, "One Sunday afternoon, on a trial run of a new LCI, we asked the builder's representative to run it up on a beach and not to be too cautious. He wasn't. The craft stopped only after it crossed the beach onto a scenic highway and disrupted traffic. But the test was useful. It gave us confidence in the ability of the ship to take heavy punishment."

This, then, is the story of one such LCI -  
the LCI (L) 215.

FROM BOSTON TO BELFAST

WAR DIARY  
of the  
USS LCI (L) 215

Personal observations and comments have been added by  
Peter Murray, Quartermaster, of the 215.

4 November 1942:

Neponset, Mass. 1005 -- The USS LCI (L) 215 was  
commissioned into the United States Navy by Commander Arnold,  
USN, acceptance being made by Lt.(jg) Donald H. Burch, USNR,  
with the following officers and men on board.

Lt.(jg) Donald H. Burch, USNR, Commanding Officer  
Ensign Henry D. Zimmermann, USNR, Executive Officer  
Ensign Clifford R. Young, USNR, Engineering Officer

Way, G.A.	Seaman 2/c
Smouse, R.M.	Seaman 2/c
Blair, H.B.	Seaman 2/c
Land, K.W.	Seaman 2/c
Murray, P.	Seaman 2/c
Mundy, M.L.	Seaman 2/c
Leonard, T.L.	Seaman 2/c
Lester, R.C.	Seaman 2/c
Howard, C.C.C.	Seaman 2/c
Lande, R.L.	Seaman 2/c
Cookman, J.L.	Apprentice Seaman
Blackwood, L.A.	Machinist Mate 2/c
Toryk, F.	Fireman 2/c
Hight, A.L.	Machinist Mate 2/c
Spadafora, J.A.	Seaman 2/c
Pope, C.L.	Fireman 2/c
Burda, R.J.	Apprentice Seaman
Stempson, I.C.	Seaman 2/c
Simpson, J.E.	Seaman 2/c

I would like to point out a few items about the crew list.  
Our Commanding Officer had been managing a branch bank at Duke  
University when he enlisted. After 30 days training he became  
an Officer and Gentleman. What we use to refer to as "30 day  
wonders". The Executive Officer had been a chemist for Phillip  
Morris Tobacco Co. and the Engineering Officer a typing teacher  
at a private girls school in Pennsylvania. They were both "90  
day wonders".

The enlisted personnel were just as inexperienced. A rating  
of Seaman 2/c meant that you had been the Navy for at least  
four months. An Apprentice Seaman less than four months. Some  
of us "old salts" had attended Service School after Boot Camp  
so that we had close to eight months service under our belts.

None of us had ever been to sea before. Ray Lande, Seaman 1/c, entered the service with that rate because of his civilian work. Either he or his family owned a Hardware Store - why this would make him eligible for that rate is anybody's guess. As it turned out G.A. "Duke" Way, Sea 2c, was the acting Chief Boatswain Mate. I had originally been penciled in as the acting Signalman 3/c but because of a conversation that took place before the ship was completed I was jumped to acting Quartermaster First Class.

While waiting for the new construction the crews were put together at the Fargo Building in Boston. While we were all getting acquainted an argument/discussion developed. It had something to do with mathematics and I was involved because just prior to joining the Navy I had taken a summer course in Trigonometry. While this was going on the Executive Officer came by to introduce himself and Kenny Land asked him if he was the Navigation Officer. He replied that he was and Land then told him that he needn't worry, if he ever got in trouble Murray would take over. He asked me if I knew anything about Navigation and I replied yes (white lie) but I had to save face in front of my new shipmates. The Exec said nothing more but just said hello again and left. In the meanwhile I then sought out help in the form of a school that was teaching Navigation to Officers in this same building. The Commander in charge told me that it was not for enlisted men but if I wanted to come around in the evenings he would give me some private tutoring. My Liberties in Boston were non-existent. I spent every evening with the Commander learning how to use a sextant and to figure out a line of position. When the Crew List was Officially posted a week later I was the acting Quartermaster and Land was relegated to Signalman. That being said we can begin the Saga of the 215.

5-7 November 1942:

Neponset, Mass. Undergoing speed trials and completing final construction.

8 November 1942:

Swinging ship, compensating compasses and deperming at Lockwood Basin, Boston Navy Yard.

9-10 November 1942:

Completion of fitting out; National Docks, Boston. Got under way for New York City. Anchoring at night in Watch Hill Sound and Cold Spring Harbor.

(The Navy had assigned a seasoned Naval Officer to ride with us and keep a watchful eye. Ensign Castlevecchi was an "old mustang" - twenty years in the Navy rising from Apprentice Seaman to a Commissioned Officer. You will note that we only sailed during the daylight hours, dropping the anchor at night. During this period I was the only enlisted man allowed at the helm (wheel) When meal time came (lunch) one of the Officers took over and I was allowed maybe 20 to 30 minutes.

11 November 1942:

Arrived at berth in New York City, 3rd Street Pier, Brooklyn

12 November 1942:

Took on supplies and fuel.

(During this short stay in New York I took the opportunity to get in touch with my "Aunt Lou and Uncle Jack" who lived across the river in Jersey City. We met in New York City and they took me to Jack Dempsey's Bar for a farewell drink. I know I was only eighteen at the time but we got away with it.)

13 November 1942:

Got under way from New York for Solomons, Maryland.

(It was approximately 0700 when we sailed out of New York Harbor - Friday the 13th. The wind was kicking up and the signal tower was flying two square red flags with black centers, one above the other. Unaware, or not bothering to notice, we continued out into the North Atlantic and into the teeth of a hurricane. The sea became horrendous, sending mountains of water over the open bridge. Since we had not been converted the wheel was out in the open. The topside was secured and all personnel were confined below decks. The Skipper, Ensign Castlevecchi, Mike Mundy - the signalman - and myself were the only ones left on the bridge. We had to use the signal halyards to tie us to our station as the water broke over us. We remained this way from 0700 until 2400 without a break and without any food.

As we entered Breakwater Harbor at the mouth of the Delaware River I was given the order to turn left. I saw, what I thought was a buoy, and turned hard right without any orders. We avoided hitting the buoy head on but it did scrape down the port side of the ship. Turned out that the "buoy" was a mine that had broken loose from one of our mine fields. Luckily for us it did not explode.

After we had anchored and secured from sea stations Ensign Castlevecchi took me into the radio shack and chewed me out royally for disobeying a direct order. I was told that when the Officer of the watch gave me an order to turn left I was to turn left no matter what. That what I had just committed could be a Court Martial offense for disobeying a direct order. I remember standing there in the privacy of that room shaking in my shoes. I had just been given a royal dressing down. As he left the room he turned to me and said, "From now on follow all orders, no matter what. By the way thanks for your quick thinking if we had hit it head on the war would have been over for us.)

14 November 1942:

Under way from Breakwater Harbor bound for Solomons, MD.

(The day was extremely cold. The Delaware was choppy and that meant that spray was kicked up over the bow and froze as it hit the fore deck and conning tower. It wasn't long before we looked like an icebreaker in the Arctic. When I got relieved for lunch Harry Blair, the Gunners Mate, chipped ice off the

14 November 1942 (continued):

front of my foul weather gear so I could remove it. It was cold.)  
We anchored for the night in the Sassafras River.

15 November 1942:

Arrived at Solomons, Md. to train LCI(L) crews.  
Wooden benches removed from troop compartments and taken ashore to base.

(When the LCI was first conceived it was for the sole purpose of a cross channel invasion from England to France. These "benches" were actually wooden seats with arm rests. Over head racks had been provided for the back packs. These were all removed and the troop compartments were stripped clean. I should point out that each troop compartment had one toilet built into one corner. As it turned out this became impractical since the toilet was below sea level. In order to empty it (flush) a handle alongside the toilet bowl had to be pumped so that the water and whatever was in it was pumped up and out into the sea. Didn't work. Stench was unbearable. Secured all toilets. If the troops had to go they were required to go topside and hang it over the side.)

16 November 1942:

Took on Trainee Crews #3065 and #3066, each with a complement of twenty-one (21) men and three (3) officers.

(Ensign Castlevecchi left us on our arrival at Solomons Naval Base. We were on our own - not only on our own but we have been aboard this strange ship for 12 days and now we are the experts. Talk about the blind leading the blind. Not quite- we had twelve days of practice - the trainees have had none.

It was at this period in time that the Captain called me into the Radio Shack and dictated a series of promotions. The Radio shack had the only typewriter on board. I was promoted to QM 2/c, Duke Way went to BM 2/c, Harry went to GM 2/c etc. To give you an idea of what this meant pay wise - from \$54.00 per month to \$120.00. Eight months ago I joined up with a salary of \$21.00 per month. After the four dollars was taken out for insurance all I got was \$17.00. Now \$120 !!!!!

17-24 November 1942:

General training operation in the Solomons Area, instruction and general practice for the trainee crews in seamanship and ship handling.

25 November 1942:

Under way for, and arrived at Little Creek, Va.

26-28 November 1942:

Berthed at Little Creek, undergoing minor repairs.  
(Minor repairs - In so far as an LCI was concerned minor repairs meant getting your deck stanchions re-welded to the deck. When one LCI came alongside another stanchions flew and if you were on deck you ran for dear life.



29 November 1942:

Made four (4) practice beachings on Buckroe Beach:

Two (2) beachings being made by Ship's Company.

two (2) beachings being made by Trainee Crews.

LCI(L) 211 broached while retracting from beach. Went to her assistance and attempted to pull her from beach. Went aground on sandbar. Radioed for assistance.

(Our radio message got a little screwed up. We got into this fix in the late afternoon and we asked for help telling Cmdr. Buckroe that we were stuck on Buckley Beach. Unfortunately we were stuck on Buckroe Beach and should have been asking Cmdr. Buckley for assistance.)

30 November 1942:

0130 Navy tug arrived and pulled the 211 and the 215 off the beach. Got under way immediately for Solomons, Md.

1 December 1942:

Arrived at Solomons, Md.

2 December 1942:

Completed training period and disembarked Trainee Crews #3065 and #3066

3 December 1942:

Under way for Baltimore, Md.

Arrived at Fairfield, Maryland Drydock Company.

4-12 December 1942:

Maryland Drydock Company, Fairfield, Md., undergoing general repairs and conversion.

(It was at this time that the extra deck was added to the conning tower. The pilot house was now enclosed. No more steering from outside. No heat but at least no wind. The troop compartments that had been stripped of the wooden seats were now equipped with canvas bunks. Four high. Anybody in those bunks would have to lay flat - doubt if there is much room to turn over.)

13 December 1942:

Enroute to and arrived at Solomons, Md.

14 December 1942:

Took on two Trainee Crews #3108 and #3109.

15 December 1942:

Remained at berth at Solomons, Md.

It was around this time that we became the first landing ship group to be commissioned in the United States Navy. we were designated LCI(L) Flotilla One.

16 December 1942:

Anti-aircraft target practice; two hundred and ninety-five (295) rounds of 20 mm ammunition expended, Chesapeake Bay Area.

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17 December 1942:

General training operations in Solomons Area, instructions and general practice for trainee crews in seamanship and ship handling. Swung ship and compensated the compasses.

18 December 1942:

Anti-aircraft target practice; four hundred and eighty-four (484) rounds of 20 mm ammunition expended, Chesapeake Bay Area.

19 December 1942:

Berthed at Solomons, Md.

20 December 1942:

Made one practice beaching in the Solomons Area, during snow storm, with LCI's 212 and 214. Pictures taken of maneuvers and beachings by TIME photographers.

21 December 1942:

Berthed in Solomons , Md.

22 December 1942:

Under way for and arrived at Little Creek, Va.  
Anchored awaiting further orders.

23 December 1942:

Remained at anchor, outside Little Creek, Va.

24-27 December 1942:

Shifted from anchorage to berth at United Nations Dock, Norfolk, Va.

We were given Liberty and I decided to try for Washington D.C. or at least Richmond, Va. Just to get away from Norfolk. I started to hitch hike and as luck (?) would have it I was given a ride by a Naval Officer who turned out to be a Catholic Chaplain. Ended up that as we drove toward Richmond he heard my confession, took me with him to a family dinner, midnight Mass - I then started back to the ship on Christmas Day. I think in the back of my mind I was going to party but I ended up doing what I was supposed to do in the first place.

28-31 December 1942:

Undergoing general training in tactical maneuvers, ship handling, and seamanship in Little Creek Area.

1 January 1943:

Detached from duty as a training ship and assigned to duty in LCI(L) Flotilla II, Group Five. The Flotilla had its number changed from One to Two. No one has ever explained the reason.

2-6 January 1943:

Undergoing general training in tactical maneuvers, ship handling, and seamanship in Little Creek Area.

7 January ~~Contributed by Denis Murray for his father Peter M~~

Made minor repairs and replaced screw, Little Creek.

8-11 January 1943:

Undergoing general training tactical maneuvers, ship handling, and seamanship in Little Creek Area.

12 January 1943:

Disembarked trainee crews #3108 and #3109 at Little Creek.

13 January 1943:

Under way to Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va. for outfitting and repairs.

14-17 January 1943:

Berthed at Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Virginia.

18 January 1943:

Took on fuel at Graney Island. Under way for Solomons, Md. Anchored in Back River for the night because of foul weather.

19 January 1943:

Under way to and berthed at Solomons, Md.

20-31 January 1943:

Solomons, Md. Area undergoing speed trials and routine training operations.

1 February 1943:

Ensign Clifford R. Young, USNR, relieved of duties as Engineering Officer.

Ensign Franklin J. Schaffner, USNR, took over duties as Engineering Officer.

2 February 1943:

Solomons Area undergoing routine training operations.

3-4 February 1943:

Under way for Annapolis, Md. accompanied by LCI's 214 & 10.

5-7 February 1943:

Berthed at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis.

(During our stay here we showed off the ship to the Naval Cadets. It was also here that we were given a surprise call to General Quarters one evening. As I led the charge to the bridge I grabbed the hand rails on the ladder leading topside and vaulted myself up the ladder. Unfortunately for me someone had closed the hatch and my head was driven down to an area around my ankles. I was knocked unconscious, head split open, and the pile up of bodies at the foot of the ladder was something else. At our re-unions this is still talked about.)

8 February 1943:

Under way from Annapolis, Md. to Little Creek, Va. via Solomons, Maryland.

9 February 1943:

Anchored off of Little Creek; shifted to berth at Little Creek. Under way again for Norfolk Navy Yard, Portsmouth, Va. Berthed at Portsmouth, Virginia to undergo repairs.

10-12 February 1943:

Berthed at Norfolk Navy Yard undergoing minor repairs and outfitting for sea.

Took aboard 18,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition. Total 20,000 rounds of 20mm ammunition now onboard.

Four thousand (4,000) rounds of 30 cal. ammunition brought onboard.

13 February 1943:

Shifted ship to Graney Island and filled fuel tanks to capacity.

Moved to Lambert Point and loaded Base Spares.

Berthed at Little Creek, Va.

14 February 1943:

Remained at berth Little Creek preparing for sea.

(I got ashore during the evening hours and tried to place a phone call to my Mother and Father in San Francisco. When they moved from Illinois to San Francisco they got an unlisted number and I did not know what it was. I got to a public phone booth and explained my predicament, also explaining that I was shipping out and wanted to say goodbye. The operator got a line as far as Chicago and then was told that all lines to SF were busy so she had Chicago hook her up to an operator in Texas and then that operator got us to Seattle who got us to someplace in Nevada who finally got a line to SF. This took a lot of doing and a lot of time. I finally got my Mother on the line and said goodbye. My Dad was in bed - he had the early shift in the shipyard. When I hung up the operator tripped something and money came pouring out of the phone box. I have been a customer of AT&T ever since.)

15 February 1943:

Under way from Little Creek, Va. for Bermuda, B.W.I.

Rendezvoused off Little Creek with our escort; destroyer Cole, two minelayers, one fleet tug, one SC and the 24 LCI's of Flotilla Two, taking departure from the Virginia Capes. Temperature stood at 13° above zero, a twenty-knot breeze kicked up a choppy sea which shot an icy spray across the fore-deck. The Flotilla kept good station through the day, but after dark the weather worsened and there blew up a heavy snow storm from the NE which later turned to sleet. This was followed by a dense fog. Cmdr. Sabin broke radio silence and ordered us to reduce speed to two-thirds.

16 February 1943:

When fog lifted there were only the flagship and eight LCI's in sight. Ordered to slow to "dead slow" speed while escorts rounded up stragglers. After five hour delay convoy resumed convoy speed. Half hour after getting under way another heavy snow storm set in, wind increased to seventy knots, sea became quite high with waves breaking over the fore-deck, main deck continually awash. Topside became untenable except the pilot house and the conning station.

17 February 1943:

Under way with high overcast. Wind quieted down and seas were not quite as high. Still unable to get a sun fix for a line of position. Cmdr. Sabin asked all skippers for their estimated positions. Believe he was averaging them out. The problem was trying to figure out where we were in relation to Bermuda since had not seen the sun or a star since taking leave of the Virginia Capes.

British patrol planes flew over convoy during the afternoon.

18 February 1943:

Convoy safely stood into St. George's Bay, Bermuda. Battered and weary but safe.

19-24 February 1943;

Berthed in the Royal Navy Dock Yard, Little Sound, Bermuda.

25-26 February 1943:

Moved ship alongside the USS MATOLE, at anchor in Great Sound.

27 February 1943:

Following men were lost as the result of a USS MATOLE liberty boat capsizing in Great Sound.

Gragg, Robert C.,	RM	3c
Leonard, Thomas L.,	Sea	2c
Redding, Grant R.,	Sea	2c
Riley, James L.,	StM	2c

1-2 March 1943:

Remained tied alongside the USS MATOLE in Great Sound.

During this period minor leaks topside were repaired along with minor adjustments to the diesel engines. The deaths of four shipmates put a cloud over us but we continued on our way. Liberty ashore in Hamilton - not really much to do. Before we sailed we each stocked up on cigarettts. I bought a case of Camels, 60 cartons, for \$27.00. That was 45¢ a carton.

3 March 1943:

Under way from Bermuda, bound for Gibraltar. In addition to the 24 LCI's of Flotilla Two we were joined with six (6) American LST's, ten (10) British LST's, plus various escorts,

3 March 1943 (continued):

the USS MATOLE took station as guide ship.

As we left Great Sound and entered the Atlantic Ocean we rose on one huge swell and the flat bottom hit the trough with a thunderous smack. The gyro compass normally floated in a bowl of mercury but the jolt we had just received splattered the mercury all over the inside of the compass binnacle and the compass just lay on its side. I reported to the Skipper and secured the Gyro. That left the boat compass to use in steering which was useless. This meant that we had to maintain station on the ship ahead and hope that they knew where they were going.

6 March 1943:

Test fired all guns. Two hundred and forty (240) rounds of 20mm ammunition expended. This was the first day that we were able to get topside because of the heavy weather.

7-22 March 1943:

No let up in the foul weather. Managed to maintain six knots but the rolling and the banging was constant. No hot food since stove could not be heated because of the severe rolling. It was cold cuts and hot coffee. Especially tough on those in the Engine Room where the smell of diesel oil made it all the more unpleasant.

23 March 1943:

Arrived safely at Gibraltar.

It was approximately midnight when we passed through the submarine nets and entered Gibraltar Harbor. We were greeted with underwater explosions all around us. A British voice came out of the darkness and told us not to worry that they were just setting off small depth charges to discourage German or Italian frogmen from swimming over from Spain with magnetic mines or explosives.

After the lines went over to dockside, Engine Room secured, Bridge secured we all just breathed a sigh of relief. We had made it - the first LCIs ever to cross the North Atlantic. Our composure was shaken a few moments later when we were rammed with terrific force from an LCI coming in on our stern with such force that it snapped our anchor cable and we lost our stern anchor.

Anchors are Title "B" material and, as such, requires a great deal of explanation as why you would lose any of it. The Exec dictated a long memo to R. G. Newbegin, Commander of Group Five explaining that it wasn't our fault and requested a replacement anchor. Some time later our original memo was returned and written across the bottom was "CIS RGN". I was told to make up a CIS file and place the memo in it. I asked what "CIS" meant and was told "Christ I'm Sorry". The file became quite large as the months and years passed.

24-25 March 1943:

Berthed at Gibraltar. Took a day or two get our land legs under us again.

26 March 1943:

Under way from Gibraltar for Mostaganem, Algeria.

27 March 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Mostaganem.

28 March -- 14 April 1943:

Remained at berth in Mostaganem Harbor.

15 April 1943:

Left Mostaganem for Arzeu, Algeria.

16-20 April 1943:

Arzeu Area; patrolled the entrance to the Bay of Arzeu. It turned out that Flotilla Two was the entire U.S. Naval presence in the Mediterranean with maybe an SC or two.

Depth charge racks were welded on our stern and were loaded with six depth charges. We would patrol back and forth across the entrance on assigned courses. If and when the SC (Sub Chaser) got a contact on Sonar they would direct us to a spot and then, on their command, we would roll a depth charge over the stern. We ran into a little problem however, when the depth charge exploded the force of the concussion hit the screws and fouled the injectors in our diesels - this caused all engines to stop and we were then dead in the water. The shallow depth of the depth charge settings combined with our slow speed did not allow us enough time to get away. Harry Blair, the Gunners Mate, solved this problem by drilling a small hole in the fuse. The depth charge was then set on "safe" rolled over the side and it would slowly settle to the bottom of the ocean. We would then get out of there at flank speed (17 knots). We would be a good distance away, the charge would explode and everyone was safe - including whatever submarine was in the area. It may have scared hell out of him. I do know that stopping dead in the water with an enemy sub close by scared hell out of us.

21 April 1943:

Relieved of Patrol Duty and returned to our primary duty of landing troops.

Took on rubber boats and troops. Made an approach to beach and landed troops using rubber boats.

I don't think the Army, or the Navy, knew what we had been designed to do. We were supposed to put this 158 foot ship on the beach, lower our ramps and disembark the troops on an enemy beach. They had us take these huge rubber boats onboard which left no room on deck (we weren't designed for this). The boats had to be thrown over the side, troops would jump into them and they would have to row into the beach. If the surf was a little rough they were either swamped or overturned.

22 April 1943:

Arzeu -- Made an approach to beach and landed troops using rubber boats.

23 April 1943:

Arzeu -- Made two (2) approaches to the beach and landed troops using rubber boats.

24 April 1943:

Arzeu -- Made one (1) approach to the beach and landed troops using rubber boats.

25 April 1943:

Made practice approach to beach at the Chelife River.

26 April 1943:

Under way with troops from Arzeu to the Chelife River.

27 April 1943:

Landed troops at the Chelife River using Higgins boats to transfer personnel to beach.

Can't remember where these Higgins boats came from but if this was actual operations they would have to come from a transport in the area. The Higgins boats had no bow ramp, that meant that the troops had to jump over the side into the water and wade ashore. Again this was not what we were designed to do.

Returned to Arzeu.

28 April 1943:

Visiting officers aboard for demonstration in landing troops by using rubber boats. Sea too rough to carry out operations.

29 April 1943:

Arzeu -- landed troops by using rubber boats in demonstration to officers of LCI(L) Flotilla One.

30 April 1943:

Arzeu -- Army personnel aboard for demonstration in landing troops by using rubber boats. Sea too rough to carry out planned operations.

Returned to Arzeu, disembarked troops, got underway for Mostaganem.

Enroute. Tested guns, one hundred and twenty (120) rounds of 20mm ammunition expended.

Arrived Mostaganem.

1-2 May 1943:

Berthed at Mostaganem.

3 May 1943:

Practiced beaching at the mouth of the Chelife River.



4-5 May 1943:

Berthed at Mostaganem. Underwent speed trials.

6 May 1943:

Practiced beaching operations.

7 May 1943:

With other LCI's of Group Five searched the Bay of Arzeu for lost rubber boats. (To the Army -- we told you so.)

8-20 May 1943:

Mostaganem -- During this period we underwent continuous tactical maneuvers.

We left port every morning and the day was spent in practicing beaching and retracting. Stand off shore a 1,000 yards and hit the beach again and again and again. This would continue for 12 or 14 hours a day before we returned to port for the night. The town of Mostaganem was off limits at night so Liberty ashore was few and far between. We did one or two days though.

21 May 1943:

Mostaganem. All Base spares and ships stores that had been placed in shore side warehouses were reloaded for our move eastward to Bizerte, Tunisia.

Early evening air raid by German bombers. Bombs fell on port area. Three hundred rounds (300) 20mm ammunition fired. No damage to ship or ships personnel.

22 May 1943:

Got under way for Bizerte, Tunisia.

23-24 May 1943:

Enroute to Bizerte.

25 May 1943:

Arrived at Bizerte. Outer harbor a mess. Sunken ships everywhere. Some by our bombers and some had been scuttled in the channel that led from the outer harbor passed La Pecherie, the former French submarine docks, to Lake Bizerte a very large inland lake.

We secured alongside the submarine docks at La Pecherie.

26 May 1943:

Proceeded to unload Base and Ship stores to assigned warehouse space ashore. Enemy bombers made run over port area. No ships guns fired. Bombers too high.

27 May 1943:

Took on two hundred Italian and fifty German Prisoners of War. The Italians were a pathetic bunch of what could only be called a rag-tag army. Some, if not most, carried what belongings they had in large bandanna like pieces of cloth. The Afrika Corp was sharp and insolent. The German Officers

27 May 1943 (continued):

demanding food service equal to or the same as our ship's Officers. We told them to assign one of their men as orderlies and we would comply. They then demanded that our officers mess attendant serve them and on finding out that he was black they refused. The Bos'n's Mate, Gunners Mate and myself went down into Number Three troop compartment to settle the disagreement. The German Colonel became insulting and spit on the Bos'n's Mate's shoes in contempt. Duke, a chewer of snuff, let fly a nice juicy gob onto the Colonel's spiffy uniform; The Colonel back handed Duke who retaliated with a crashing right to the Colonel's face. The Gunner's Mate and I were armed with Thompson sub-machine guns. Duke had a forty-five on his hip. We cocked our weapons and backed up to the ladder. Once top-side the hatch was secured after we threw down a case or two of Army field rations. I think we chose the ones that were the most unpopular.

After all of that we got under way for Bone, Algeria.

28 May 1943:

Arrived at Bone, unloaded the Prisoners of War.

Anchored outside the harbor of Bone. Evening air raid by German bombers concentrated mostly on port area. They didn't pay much attention to small ships in the outer harbor so we didn't call attention to ourselves.

29 May 1943:

Returned to Bizerte; securing to piers at La Pecherie.

During a very lightning bombing raid expended fifty-five rounds of 20mm ammunition. No damage to ship or ship's company.

30 May -- 13 June 1943:

Remained in the Bizerte Area either at the piers in La Pecherie or anchored in Lake Bizerte. The only building that was undamaged in the town of Bizerte was being used as an Officers Club. I have no idea where the population went but there weren't any to be seen. The abandoned French Seaplane Base hangers were being used for recreation purposes. So once in awhile we were able to catch a movie or USO show. One evening on the way to the movie we passed a POW compound that held Italian prisoners. The American GI was sitting there reading a magazine and an Italian prisoner was sitting next to him cleaning the GI's rifle. There were stories that when the GI's would take a work party of POW's out of the compound they would most often come back with one or two extra. Evidently the chow was better in the American compounds than our British Allies'.

14 June 1943:

Embarked one company of Third Infantry Division at Ferryville for practice landings. (This time we were going to do it the way we had been designed.)

Disembarked troops by beaching on the south shore of Lake Bizerte.

Returned to anchorage in Lake Bizerte.

15 June 1943:

Remained at anchor.

16 June 1943:

Embarked one company of the Third Infantry Division at Ferryville. Returned to our anchorage for the night. This was the first time that we had troops overnight. It is difficult to describe the conditions onboard the ship. One hundred and eighty men aboard a 158 foot ship leaves very little space for walking around. Can't even begin to describe the sanitary conditions - open air latrines had been installed on the stern. They had to make do with field rations but at least we put them into a large pot heated them and tried our best to make them appetizing.

17 June 1943:

Disembarked troops by beaching on the south shores of Lake Bizerte.

18-22 June 1943:

Remained in the Bizerte Area. All personal gear removed from the ship to lockers ashore. Interior bulkheads stripped of all paint. All flammable material removed from ship to make it combat ready.

23 June 1943:

Troops of the 20th Engineers, Third Infantry Division, embarked for "Copy Book". Anchored in Lake Bizerte.

24-25 June 1943:

Remained at anchor in Lake Bizerte with troops onboard.

26 June 1943:

Under way for practice landing outside Harbor of Bizerte in the Bay of Bizerte. Weather worsened and surf became too high to risk landing troops. Returned to Lake Bizerte and proceeded to disembark troops by beaching on the south shore.

After we had disembarked the troops they had approximately 20 miles to walk back to their bivouac area. That evening we tuned in Sally, the Berlin Bitch. She broadcast from Berlin and this particular night she named the names of the GIs that dropped out of the line of march. She had not only the Company number but names of the GIs. Talk about a spy system. So much for our love of the Ay-rabs.

27 June -- 4 July 1943:

Remained at anchor Lake Bizerte.

5 July 1943:

Moved ship to the piers at La Pecherie and proceeded to embark troops of the 20th Engineers, Third Infantry Division. Returned to our anchorage in Lake Bizerte. Shortly after dusk we were subjected to an extremely heavy bombing raid by German high altitude bombers. Two search lights, one on either side

9 July 1943

To: All Naval Personnel this Command  
From: Sir Andrew B. Cunningham RN, Admiral of the Fleet  
Supreme Naval Commander, Mediterranean Forces

We are about to embark on the most momentous enterprise of the war - striking for the first time at the enemy in his own land.

Success means the opening of the "Second Front" with all the it implies, and the first move toward the rapid and decisive defeat of our enemies.

Our objective is clear and our primary duty is to place this vast expedition ashore in the minimum of time and subsequently to maintain our military and air forces as they drive relentlessly forward into enemy territory.

In the light of this duty, great risks must be and are to be accepted. The safety of our own ships and all distracting considerations are to be relegated to second place, or disregarded as the accomplishment of our primary duty may require.

On every commanding officer, officer and rating rests the individual and personal duty of ensuring that no flinching in determination or failure of effort on his own part will hamper this great enterprise.

I rest confident in the resolution, skill and endurance of you all to whom this momentous enterprise is entrusted.

5 July 1943 (continued):

of the lake were scanning the night skies directed by radar. When the two light beams crossed they had the bomber caught in the web. Dozens of other search lights came into play and all hell broke loose. The Destroyers in the lake opened up with their five inch guns. Shore based anti-aircraft sent thousands of shells skyward. Every body opened up with every gun imaginable. 20mm, 40mm and even the GIs onboard were firing their rifles into the sky. Our Skipper ordered our gunners below to protect them from the falling shrapnel. What goes up must come down. The bombers were at least 20,000 feet in the air. The five inch guns of the Destroyers were having a hard time reaching them so a 20mm was useless. One bomber was seen to get hit and started a slow spin toward the earth. Parachutes were soon seen floating down. The falling shrapnel was pinging off the decks and splashing in the water of the lake so heavily that all troops were ordered below. We later heard that more people were wounded by the falling shrapnel than by the bombs. Since the lake was full of shipping there was no room for maneuvering so we remained at anchor and prayed that we didn't get hit. Several near misses but no injury to ship or ship's company.\* \*

No guns fired.

6 July 1943:

0500 Got under way for Sousse following the Tunisian War Channel around Cape Bon thence in a southerly direction down the Tunisian Coast. Arrived and anchored outside the harbor of Sousse at 2230.

7 July 1943:

Berthed in Sousse harbor 0730 to 1630, during which time troops were put ashore for exercise. Reloaded troops and proceeded to anchorage in formation outside the harbor.

8 July 1943:

Remained at anchor outside the harbor of Sousse.  
2250 got under way for Sicily.

9 July 1943:

Joined other convoys of LCIs and LSTs at 1000 and proceeded to the "marshaling yard" five miles west of the Island of Gozo. All U.S. and Canadian convoys had to pass through this area and it was there that the LCIs and LSTs were to split up and join their respective attack force. JOSS, CENT & DIME were to form into their approach dispositions. Wind increased from a force 3 to a 6 or 7. Seas became exceedingly high.

Rendezvous made under extremely trying conditions and considerable difficulty. Managed to maintain course at slow speed.

10 July 1943:

Reserve convoy became separated due emergency course change at 0100 and proceeded more or less independently until arrival

10 July 1943 (continued):

at Reserve Group rendezvous off Licata, Sicily.

Heavy air attack by enemy bombers at 0510. Several near misses. Standing by at rendezvous point from 0605 until 0641. Orders changed by OTC, anchored in vicinity of rendezvous point.

0810 Under way for Red Beach.

Beached at 1035. Lowered ramps and proceeded to disembark troops.

Retracted at 1041, all troops put ashore without incident. German Tiger tanks were observed coming over a rise beyond the beach but they were taken under fire by U.S. Destroyers operating very close to the beach.

Returned to rendezvous area and anchored at 1300.

Air attack at 1325. High altitude bombers and Stuka dive bombers carried out attack. One hundred and twenty (120) rounds of 20mm ammunition expended. Many near misses but no hits. No damage to ship or ship's personnel.

Under way for Bizerte at 1635.

11 July 1943:

Under way from Licata, Sicily to Bizerte, Tunisia. \* \*

12 July 1943:

Arrived at Bizerte and berthed at the piers at La Pecherie.

13 July 1943:

Shifted ship to the anchorage in Lake Bizerte.

14 July 1943:

Moved ship to Piers at La Pecherie. Took on troops of Company "L" 39th Infantry, 9th Division.

Got under way for Licata, Sicily.

15 July 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Licata, Sicily. Troops disembarked. Got under way for Bizerte.

16 July 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Bizerte. Proceeded to the Lake and dropped anchor.

17-28 July 1943:

Maintenance and repair in the Bizerte Area.

29 July 1943:

Got under way in convoy of LCIs proceeding to Palermo, Sicily.

30 July 1943:

Enroute from Bizerte to Palermo, Sicily.

Detached with LCI(L) 33 to locate and return with LCT 221 which broke down. Located the LCT and retraced course with the LCT to Bizerte. Anchored in Bizerte Road.

Contributed by Denis Murray for his father Peter

31 July 1943:

Entered harbor and berthed at La Pecherie, Bizerte. Got under way with LCI(L) 33 and proceeded to Palermo, Sicily.

1 August 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Palermo, Sicily. Secured alongside the LCI(L) 214 at quayside. Approximately 0430 48 German bombers attack without warning. Flares over harbor and heavy bombing followed. Estimated later to be about sixty very large bombs. A rail car containing 900 tons of ammunition was hit and caught fire. A British tanker carrying aviation gasoline in 55 gallon drums was hit and sunk but not before the barrels of gasoline were sent flying through the air covering the water with flaming fuel. So we now have bombs dropping all around, exploding ammunition going every which way and flaming drums of gasoline flying through the air.

The Bos'n's Mate cut the mooring lines and we were out of there. The scene was chaotic, we zigged and zagged through the exploding debris trying to make our way to the harbor entrance. Unfortunately this was protected by a submarine net and it was closed. We milled around in the interior harbor avoiding each other and the exploding bombs and ammunition. When a net tender opened the nets there was a mad rush to get the hell out of that harbor. We were in the lead with a Destroyer coming up fast astern. It was a collision course but the Skipper said we had the "right of way" and I was ordered to "steady as you go". I maintained our heading and looking over my shoulder I could see that "tin-can" coming up fast with a "bone in her teeth". It was at the very last moment that the order was given to "give way". I did and that destroyer went by us so close and so fast that we were nearly rolled over.

We proceeded to the Gulf of Palermo outside the harbor and anchored.

2-3 August 1943:

Berthed in Palermo during the day; anchored at night in the Gulf of Palermo.

4 August 1943:

Anchored in the Gulf of Palermo. Heavy enemy air raid from 0355 to 0505. Several near misses. Heavy sniper fire from the shore. USS Shubrick observed to take three hits by bombs but is still operating. No damage to our ship or personnel.

Proceeded up the coast to the American lines. Fighting observed ashore. Beached and loaded wounded American troops for transport to the U.S. Army Hospital Ship, SEMINOLE.

This meant that we had to go ashore and carry the stretchers of the wounded aboard. If blood was needed we were laid on the deck next to the wounded and there was a blood transfusion there and then. What you had to do was insist that given once that was enough.

Returned to anchorage in the Gulf of Palermo.

5 August 1943:

Resumed rescue operation of American wounded. Proceeded up the coast to the combat area, beached, and ships personnel went ashore to carry wounded GIs aboard. Transported them to the U.S. Army Hospital Ship, USS SEMINOLE.

Returned to Palermo Harbor. Moved ship to anchorage for the night in the Gulf of Palermo.

6 August 1943:

Enemy planes dropped flares over the Gulf. Several bombs dropped. Enemy planes driven off by Allied night fighters. No guns fired.

Berthed in Palermo Harbor during the day and returned to the anchorage outside during the night.

7 August 1943:

Docked in Palermo during the day and returned to the anchorage in the Gulf of Palermo at night.

8 August 1943:

Transferred three hundred and fifty (350) rounds of six (6) inch projectiles and three hundred and fifty (350) six (6) inch powder cases; one hundred and fifty (150) rounds of five inch .38 ammunition to the USS PHILADELPHIA from the USS SAVANAH.

9 August 1943:

Took aboard food supplies at Palermo for PC559 and got under way for Caronia, Sicily.

Tied alongside DD419 to obtain orders and sailing directions for Caronia.

10 August 1943:

Tied alongside the USS LCI(L) 217 at anchor off Caronia, Sicily.

Four Stuka Dive bombers attack shortly after day-break. No hits but very close near misses that threw water over the ship. One Stuka observed to have been hit and was smoking as it left the area. LST 318 seen to take a hit and appeared to be quite heavily damaged. One hundred and fifty rounds of 20mm ammunition expended.

Food transferred to PC559.

Beached east of Caronia and took on elements of the 2nd Battalion, 30th Regimental Combat Team, 45th Division.

This would be their second leap frog operation in three days.

Under way for operations east of Cape Orlando at Brolo, Sicily.

11 August 1943:

0315 --Commenced landing troops on hostile beach at Brolo.

No casualties.

0321 --Commenced to retracted from beach when enemy gun fire was observed. Troops on beach now under fire from 88mm cannon. Our job completed - returned to Palermo anchorage.



12-13 August 1943:

Berthed in Palermo during the day; anchored in the Gulf of Palermo at night.

14 August 1943:

Moved ship alongside the USS PHILADELPHIA for meeting of all Commanding Officers. (Managed to scrounge five gallons of ice cream from the Phillies' crew. Boy these guys on a Light Cruiser really had it tough.)

Proceeded to the docks in Palermo. Took on supplies and returned to anchorage in the Gulf.

15 August 1943:

Got under way from the Gulf of Palermo for Termini Immerge. Troops of Company "L" and "M", 157th Infantry and members of Medical Detachment came onboard.

Proceeded east to land troops on the north coast at Milazzo.

16 August 1943:

Landed troops at Milazzo, Sicily. No enemy opposition as the beach site had fallen to the U.S. 7th Army. German troops had already escaped to Messina.

Returned to Palermo developing steering and engine trouble on the way. Limped into the Gulf of Palermo and anchored.

17-18 August 1943:

Docked in Palermo Harbor during the day and returned to anchorage at night.

19 August 1943:

Under way from Palermo to Licata, Sicily in convoy of LSTs

20 August 1943:

Anchored outside the harbor of Licata. Moved ship into harbor and took on troops of the 45th Division. Returned to anchorage outside harbor.

21 August 1943:

Got under way for Bizerte, Tunisia, North Africa.

22 August 1943:

Arrived at Bizerte. Disembarked troops at the piers in La Pecherie and anchored for the night in Lake Bizerte.

23 August 1943:

Remained at anchor in Lake Bizerte.

24 August 1943:

Got under way for and arrived at Tunis.

This is my 19th birthday. There is a very hot wind blowing from the south off the desert. The temperature is at least 120° and the poor guys in the engine room have seen the mercury in their thermometer go out of sight. It only goes to 180°. 15 minutes was the longest you could stay in the engine room.

24 August 1943 (continued):

Fire hoses were rigged to spray water over the deck house in hopes that it would cool off the metal. Inside was like an oven. As I mentioned before, the Engine Room was untenable. All bare skin had to be covered since touching any hot metal would cause a burn. The controls were handled by the guys borrowing asbestos gloves from the Gunners Mates. They would spend fifteen minutes in the Engine Room come topside stand under a salt water fire hose and go back for another fifteen minutes, when they came back up they would be bone dry and covered with salt.

25-27 August 1943:

Berthed at Tunis, maintenance and repairs.  
Liberty for ship's personnel.

This has been the first Liberty in what could be loosely termed a civilized city since we left Mostaganem on the 22nd of May. I remember riding in a horse drawn open carriage around the broad streets. We had managed to get a bottle of whiskey. The bottle had a white horse on the label so we naturally figured it was White Horse Scotch. The trouble with this is that distilled spirits were foreign to Tunisia; wine or beer - yes. Whiskey - no. It must have been wood alcohol, I do know that it was the foulest smelling liquid I've ever tasted. The old story that you hold your nose and I'll pour it down your throat - now I'll hold my nose and you pour it down my throat. As it turned out there was a great deal of wood alcohol used and there were many a GI that either died or went blind from it.

I had Liberty on the 25th and on the 26th I was assigned to Shore Patrol in the city. My morning watch found me standing guard at one of the known entrances to the Casbah (Native Quarters) keeping all Allied troops from entering. Four hours of standing in the hot sun dressed in whites with leggings and a forty-five automatic on my hip. I was turned loose on roving patrol in the afternoon and naturally headed into the Casbah. I did so with one hand on the gun at my hip. That gun was cocked. As luck would have it who do I run into but Duke Way the Chief Bos'n's Mate off the ship. He had been on Shore Patrol the day before and now he was in an area that was Off Limits to Allied Personnel. You don't mess with a Chief off of your own ship, not if you're smart, so I just went along with him since he already knew where the best wine was to be found.

28 August 1943:

Shifted ship to La Goulette. Installed ramp preventers.  
Returned to berth in Tunis.

29 August -- 2 September 1943:

Remained at berth in Tunis.

3 September 1943:

Moved ship to La Goulette. Entered dry dock and proceeded to scrape bottom.

4 September 1943:

Dry dock at La Goulette. Set screws; scraped and painted the bottom.

Returned to Tunis.

5 September 1943:

Berthed at Tunis.

6 September 1943:

Under way from Tunis to Bizerte.

Anchored in the Lake Bizerte anchorage.

7-10 September 1943:

Maintenance and repair in the Area of Lake Bizerte and La Pecherie, Bizerte.

11 September 1943:

Embarked English troops for transportation to the USS BOISE. After change of orders, troops were disembarked at La Pecherie, Bizerte.

12-13 September 1943:

Maintenance and repair in the area of Lake Bizerte and La Pecherie, Bizerte.

14 September 1943:

Supplies for LSTs brought aboard.

Got under way for Tripoli accompanied by LCI(L) 217.

15 September 1943:

Enroute to Tripoli, Libya.

16 September 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Tripoli, Libya.

17-19 September 1943:

Remained at berth in Tripoli Harbor.

It was here that I became acquainted with members of a British anti-aircraft gun crew that was stationed on the stone pier. Members of the Scottish Regiment the Black Watch who had fought at El Alamein. We had a fifty pound chest of black tea that we rarely used so I traded them for canned butter and jam. It was the first time in years that they had fresh tea leaves. They were so grateful that I was made an honorary member of their Regiment and was presented with a khaki battle beret adorned with the "red hackle".

We did make a journey into the town proper but it was pretty useless since they only served tea or lemonade.

The only other interesting point of interest was the sunken Italian Hospital Ship in the harbor. It sat there with a large gaping hole in its side, the result of a British torpedo. To sink a Hospital ship is definitely a no-no. However, on closer inspection one could see that this "hospital ship" was full of war supplies. Guns, ammunition and vehicles.

20-23 September 1943:

Food supplies transferred to LSTs.  
Remained at berth.

24 September 1943:

Transferred remainder of supplies to the USS LCI(L) 36.  
Got underway for Bizerte.

25 September 1943:

Enroute to Bizerte from Tripoli.

26 September 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Bizerte.  
Flares dropped over Bizerte; no guns fired.

27 September 1943:

Embarked British troops. Got underway for Salerno, Italy  
in convoy of LCIs.

28 September 1943:

Enroute to Salerno, Italy.

29 September 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Salerno, Italy.  
General Quarters -- Red Alert from guide ship. No guns fired.  
Disembarked British troops in the harbor of Salerno, Italy.  
Anchored for the night in Salerno Bay.

30 September 1943:

Got underway for Bizerte.  
Friendly aircraft circled convoy twice, dropping two yellow  
flares.

1 October 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Bizerte.

2 October 1943:

Embarked British troops.  
Anchored in Lake Bizerte for the night.

3 October 1943:

Got underway for Salerno, Italy accompanied by HMS LST  
407.

4 October 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Salerno, Italy.

5 October 1943:

Disembarked British troops at Salerno, Italy.  
Anchored in the Bay of Salerno.

6 October 1943:

Got underway for Palermo, Sicily in convoy of LSTs towing  
pontoons, LCIs towing LCTs.

7 October 1943:

Enroute to Palermo, Sicily. Very heavy weather, one LCT being towed breaking in two. Acted as signal relay to LCI(L) 48 towing LCT far astern of convoy.

8 October 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Palermo, Sicily.

9-15 October 1943:

Maintenance and repair Palermo Harbor.

16 October 1943:

Got underway for Bizerte Harbor.

17 October 1943:

Enroute to and arrived at Bizerte.

18 October 1943:

Lt.(jg) Henry D. Zimmermann, Jr., USNR detached from duty as the Executive Officer.

Ensign James T. Brady, Jr., USNR reported aboard to take over duties as the Executive Officer.

Remained at berth in La Pecherie, Bizerte.

19-25 October 1943:

Maintenance and repair, La Pecherie, Bizerte.

26 October 1943:

Embarked 139 British troops and officers.

27-28 October 1943:

Underway for the Bay of Naples.

29 October 1943:

Arrived Naples Harbor. Tied up along side LCI(L) 16. Disembarked troops at 0905. 1530 proceeded to the Gulf of Naples and anchored at assigned anchorage. 1710 Hoisted anchor and set course for La Pecherie, Bizerte.

30 October 1943:

Underway on various courses for Bizerte.

31 October 1943:

1330 Arrived Bizerte Harbor - tied up at the starboard side of pier 27, La Pecherie.

1 November 1943:

Moved from pier 27 to Lake Bizerte. Tied up alongside USS DELTA for minor repairs.

2-3 November 1943:

Remained alongside the USS DELTA undergoing minor repairs.

4 November 1943:

Moved from Lake Bizerte to the portside of LCI(L) 41. Pier 27, La Pecherie.

The 215 was one year old today and in celebration we took up a collection among the crew and the cook, Stu Stempson, was sent on a foraging mission. He made a deal with a Merchant Marine Captain for some fresh meat (steaks) and potatoes. A couple of Red Cross women were invited aboard and we had a Birthday Party complete with cake. Officers were not invited.

5 November 1943:

0836 Cast off lines and proceeded down the channel to an area off Karouba for the purpose of swinging ship to compensate all compasses. 1052 returned to the portside of LCI(L) 41.

6 November 1943:

Remained alongside LCI(L) 41.

7 November 1943:

2335 Took on 225 cases of Army Field rations.

8 November 1943:

180 Officers and men of Headquarters & Headquarters Battery & Service Battery of the 932nd Field Artillery came onboard with two more days of field rations.

9 November 1943:

Got underway and took station astern of the 213. 1800 Red, White flares sighted at head of convoy. General Quarters sounded. 1821 Secured from General Quarters. No guns fired.

10 November 1943:

Continuing in convoy to the Bay of Naples.

11 November 1943:

Arrived Bay of Naples. Red Alert sounded while in the approach channel. General Quarters sounded. Enemy aircraft bombing from high altitude; continued into the Harbor. 1048 Tied to the portside of the 213. Disembarked troops over our starboard ramp. On completion cast off lines and proceeded to assigned anchorage in the Bay of Naples. General Quarters again, enemy aircraft coming in for another bombing run. This time chased by Allied fighters. No guns fired.

12 November 1943:

Hoisted anchor and proceeded to Castellamare. This was south of Naples near the ancient City of Pompeii.

13 November 1943:

0930 Red Alert. 0945 Secured. 1202 Yellow Alert. 1230 Red Alert. Enemy aircraft bombing Naples Harbor. Heavy anti-aircraft fire over Naples. 2300 Secured from General Quarters. No ship's guns fired. Great fireworks show to say the least.

14 November 1943:

0145 Heavy seas parted #2 spring line. Doubled all lines. During this period at Castellemare I spend a few hours of my leisure time to hitchhike south to the town of Sorrento. Turned out that not only was I the only American in Sorrento but the first American sailor to visit the place since the invasion. I remember going into one store that had its walls covered with pictures of the old movie star Norma Shearer. She evidently married an Italian Count and this store provided her trousseau. This is where I purchased a beautiful large cameo brooch. No amount of haggling could get the price down and no cigarettes or candy bars -- twenty American green dollars. This is the brooch I gave to Peggy as an engagement present.

15 November 1943:

Moved ship to Naples Harbor. Tied up alongside LCI(L) 9.

16 November 1943:

Remained at berth alongside the 9.

17 November 1943:

Acted as runner between base and ships in the anchorage. 1645 Proceeded to form convoy. 2000 Passed the Isle of Capri enroute to Bizerte.

18 November 1943:

Enroute to Bizerte.

19 November 1943:

1603 Arrived La Pecherie piers. Secured Bridge and Engine Room. 2002 Red Alert. General Quarters. Enemy aircraft in quick bomb run over Lake Bizerte. 2023 Secured from GQ. No guns fired.

20-21 November 1943:

Remained at pier.

22 November 1943:

Ordered to Karouba small boat dry-dock with water for LCT 35. Transferred water and returned to berth at the pier in La Pecherie.

23 November 1943:

Embarked 113 Officers and men of the French Army with supplies. Remained at the pier.

24 November 1943:

Got underway and proceeded to Italy in convoy.

25 November 1943:

Proceeding to Italy. Rough seas and squalls.

26 November 1943:

Ordered to the Gulf of Pozzuoli. Tied up alongside the 194, which was moored to the quay, proceeded to disembark troops. 1750 Red Alert. General Quarters sounded. Enemy aircraft dropped several bombs into the bay. No damage to ship or personnel. 1925 secured from General Quarters.

27 November 1943:

1330 Underway from Pozzuoli. Joined group of LSTs, formed two columns and proceeded to Bizerte.

28 November 1943:

Proceeding to Bizerte in convoy.

29 November 1943:

Approaching Bizerte anchorage; escort vessel left station and engaged in hunt for submarine. Dropped three (3) depth charges at 1400. Three (3) more charges dropped at 1415. Could observe no results. Proceeded to Pier 25, La Pecherie and secured Bridge and Engine Room at 1550.

30 November 1943:

Remained at Pier 25, La Pecherie.

1 December 1943:

Embarked 175 Officers and men of the British 19th Artillery and proceeded to get underway for Italy.

2 December 1943:

Underway in convoy of LCIs and LSTs.

3 December 1943:

Underway in convoy. 1307 LST 359 broke down and is proceeding on one engine. 1358 mine sighted. LCI(L) 10 dropped astern of convoy and proceeded to fire at it. Mission accomplished - mine exploded. 1430 guns 3 and 4 commenced firing practice. 120 rounds expended. 1433 LST 237 broke down and fell astern of convoy.

4 December 1943:

Proceeding as directed to Italy. 1300 British ship looking like a ferry boat but flying the Royal Navy Man-o-War Ensign abeam to starboard.

5 December 1943:

Arrived Taranto, Italy. Disembarked troops.

6 December 1943:

Proceeded to cast off lines and got underway for Bizerte.

7-8 December 1943:

Underway for Bizerte.



9 December 1943:

Arrived at Bizerte. Secured alongside Pier 27, La Pecherie.

10-11 December 1943:

Remained at berth Pier 27.

12 December 1943:

Embarked 145 Officers and men of the U.S. Army. Replacements for various combat units.

13 December 1943:

Underway for Naples in convoy with 8 LCIs and 6 escorts.

15 December 1943:

Arrived Bay of Naples. Ordered to disembark troops at Nisida. On disembarking troops set sail immediately for Bizerte.

16 December 1943:

Underway for Bizerte. 1400 one engine stopped for two minutes for minor repairs. 1405 two other engines stopped for three minutes for repairs. Arrived Bizerte on schedule.

Directed to Pier 25 La Pecherie.

17-18 December 1943:

Remained at berth La Pecherie.

19 December 1943:

Embarked Officers and men of the French Army. Underway for Italy.

21 December 1943:

Arrived at Nisida. Tied alongside HMS LCI(L) 102. Disembarked troops over our port ramp. Underway for Bizerte as enemy aircraft dropped bombs in the Bay of Naples.

23 December 1943:

Arrived Bizerte. Tied alongside the 212 at Pier 25, La Pecherie.

24-28 December 1943:

Moved ship to Karouba. Minor repairs and routine maintenance.

29 December 1943:

Moved ship back to La Pecherie. Tied up alongside the 212. Remained at berth through 3 January 1944.

4 January 1944:

Embarked 146 Officers and men, replacements for various U.S. Army combat units.

5-6 January 1944:

Remained at berth. Troops on board.

7 January 1944:

Underway for Italy. Speed 9 knots.

9 January 1944:

Arrived Nisida. Tied alongside 213. Disembarked troops via port ramp.

1223 Units of the 3rd Infantry Division came onboard for training exercises.

1450 commenced beaching exercise. Rest of day spent loading and unloading troops either by beaching or using Higgins boats.

2118 Secured for the day. Tied up alongside the 217, Nisida.

10 January 1944:

Elements of the 3rd Division came onboard for beaching exercise.

1015 first unloading of troops. Proceeded to make six (6) more loadings and unloadings during the day.

2118 Secured for the day alongside the 214.

11-15 January 1944:

Exercises continued daily with various elements of the 3rd Infantry Division.

These were twelve hour days of beaching, having troops go ashore, retracting and then returning to the beach.

Re-loading troops - putting out to sea - turning around and going back into the beach.

16 January 1944:

Embarked Company "F", 7th Infantry, 3rd Division. Underway for practice landings at Salerno.

17 January 1944:

Sailing south for Salerno Bay for beaching exercises.

18 January 1944:

0210 Beaching stations

0401 Beached on shore of Salerno Bay. Troops unable to disembark because of deep water.

0413 Commenced to retract.

0414 Check line on port ramp broke. Unable to control ramp which went over the side.

0425 Cut remaining cables. Ramp allowed to fall free of ship.

0429 LCI(L) 191 collided with us while we were retracting.

Hit us portside forward. No damage to water tight integrity of the hull or to any Navy or Army personnel.

0433 Made second attempt at landing. Lowered starboard ramp and commenced landing troops.

0457 All troops ashore. Returned to Pozzuoli.

(This was a very poor show. The weather was bad. For some reason we were all screwed up. Bad luck of cables breaking, ramps being lost and ships colliding on the beach didn't make for a very good impression on the Army).

19 January 1944:

At Pozzuoli alongside the 214. Received port ramp from LCI(L) 10. Gave spare anchor to LCI(L) 12.

20 January 1944:

Re-embarked Company "F", 7th Infantry, 3rd Division. Our next landing will be on a hostile beach. I wonder what is going through the minds of these GIs? These are the same guys that were aboard when everything got fouled up on the 18th.

21 January 1944:

Got underway, formed convoy and headed north for Anzio.

22 January 1944:

0153 What first appeared to have been a ship exploding turned out to be rockets fired at the beach. This was the first time we had witnessed a rocket barrage and it was awesome. Found out later that 2000 five inch rockets hit the beach - all at the same time.

0200 Proceeded to the beach in the third assault wave following two waves of LCVPs. We were the first LCI assault wave.

0250 Beached on schedule. Lowered ramps and proceeded to disembark troops. LCI(L) 211 on our starboard side evidently grounded on a false beach. Two LCVPs observed taking off troops from the 211.

0300 All troops ashore commenced retracting procedure.

0303 Heavy machine gun fire opened up from beach. A burst raked the conning tower but concentrated its effort on the 211 and the two LCVPs unloading troops. Unable to use our guns since U.S. troops are ashore. Completed retracting and lay-to in rendezvous area.

0635 Six Messerschmitts broke out of clouds and made strafing run down the beach. LCI(L) 20 took direct hit from a bomb, appears to be on fire. P-38s arrived on scene.

0700 formed convoy of LCIs and returned to Pozzuoli. Berthing alongside the 214.

23 January 1944:

0845 shifted ship from the 214 to the starboard side of LCI(L) 75.

1740 Company "K" and part of Company "M", 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Division came onboard for transportation to Anzio.

1905 Five men, injured when a hand grenade exploded in #4 troop compartment, were carried ashore to waiting ambulances.

1951 Cast off lines and proceeded to Gulf of Pozzuoli to form convoy. Fell into position astern of the 213, starboard column.

24 January 1944:

Arrived at anchorage off Anzio beachhead. Two Red Alerts. All hands at battle stations. Enemy aircraft overhead bombing anchorage and harbor. 378 20mm shells expended. Anchored waiting orders to enter harbor.

1107 Cable broke on bow anchor causing us to lose it.

1258 Proceeded into harbor and went alongside the 213 at Pope Innocent's mole. The previous air raid had caused havoc. The LCI(L) 32 had taken a direct hit, the bomb exploding under her bottom, was a total loss. The unlucky 211 got hit again by a near miss that exploded on a large crane on the mole and partially fell on her foredeck. The shrapnel holes in her super structure made her look like a sieve.

Disembarked troops and returned to anchorage area. Long range German artillery started lobbing shells into the area.

55 Fock-Wulf fighter-bombers and Stuka dive bombers came out of the low clouds and mist. Things became very chaotic. Spitfires, P51s and P-38s joined the fight and about two-thirds of the German planes scattered. Eight were seen to fall into the sea. The remaining German planes carried out the attack with radio controlled bombs and aerial torpedoes. They went for the larger Naval ships. Two British destroyers were hit; one had its bridge and forecastle demolished, it later broke in two and sank. The other was put out of action and retired from the area. While this was going on we were trying to keep out of everyone's way and still stay in the area that had been swept clear of mines. A minesweeper hit one and the explosion shot water at least a hundred and fifty feet into the air. This raid was followed by three more; one by 15 planes the next had 43 and finally the last with 52. An LST was hit and went down. The DD USS Plunckett was hit and put out of action then another British destroyer hit a mine and was out of the fight. Three British Hospital ships were attacked and after several near misses one got a direct hit but didn't sink.

As darkness fell we formed convoy and headed for Pozzuoli. This day had been unreal to say the least and possibly the fullest of any that we had spent since entering the Med. Four destroyers sunk or disabled, one LST, two minesweepers and the British cruiser HMS Penelope which had been hit with radio controlled bombs. The LST that took a hit was loaded with troops and ammunition. We were later told that when things had quieted down the sea was covered with debris and floating bodies. We missed that - Thank God.

25 January 1944:

Arrived Harbor of Pozzuoli. Tied up alongside LCI(L) 33. Crew called to General Quarters three times during the day. This delayed the loading of artillery ammunition aboard ship by the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corp. These GIs were all black and they were handling the canisters of 105mm shells with kid gloves. Every time a Red Alert was sounded they would knock off and run for cover. It took eight hours to get the shells stacked on deck. As the last canister came aboard lines were cast off and we proceeded to the Anzio beachhead.

26 January 1944:

Arrived Anzio Harbor. Went alongside Nero's mole. All hands ordered to stand to and unload ammunition. Engines were left on idle as those on duty in the engine room were pressed into unloading duties. The Executive Officer pressed any passing GI, Officers or enlisted men, into unloading at the point of a .45 automatic. As we were "throwing" the canisters containing 3 105mm shells onto the mole the long range German artillery commenced shelling. All ammunition was ashore within 30 minutes. The Skipper yelled for full astern and headed for the Conning tower, the engine crew beat every one to their stations and we were backing down before the lines were cast off. The Bos'n simply grabbed a fire axe and cut the lines. The shelling became more severe as we backed out - swung around and departed at flank speed. 16 inch shells were falling all around as we cleared the harbor entrance and zig-zagged out of the area.

It took the Army nearly eight hours to load it on deck and we put it ashore in damn near 30 minutes flat and then got the hell out of there.

27 January 1944:

At berth in Pozzuoli tied up along the quay. Two calls to General Quarters first one at 0120 and the second at 1850.

During our operational stay in Pozzuoli I had met an Italian who befriended me or maybe I befriended him. I forget the circumstances of our meeting but everytime that we would pull into port I would be told that my "Dago" friend was waiting for me on the quay. We would stroll the block or two into the center of this little fishing village and have a cafe espresso and a shot of cherry herring. Believe it or not he would always insist on paying. Through an interpreter he explained that his wife did not take in laundry but felt it would be an honor if she were allowed to do mine. Well I gave him some laundry and they came back sparkling clean - washed, ironed and even repaired. A T-shirt that had holes in it had even been darned.

28 January 1944:

Refueled oil and water.

1645 Embarked 165 Officers and men of Company "U", 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Division.

1930 Underway for Anzio astern of the 212.

29 January 1944:

1226 Alongside HMS LCI(L) 315, Pope Innocents' mole.

Unloaded troops and rations.

1245 Underway - Formed convoy and headed for Pozzuoli.

30 January 1944:

0840 arrived at Pozzuoli. Tied up alongside the 214.

31 January 1944:

Moved ship to Nisida.

1 February 1944:

Took on 2,000 gallons of fuel oil.

2 February 1944:

Remained at berth in Nisida.

3 February 1944:

Proceeded to Naples. Tied up alongside the British tanker Empire Gawain. Took on 4,000 gallons of fuel oil and thence to Pozzuoli. On arrival tied up alongside LCI(L) 33.

4 February 1944:

Underway for Bizerte, Tunisia.

6 February 1944:

Diverted to Palermo, Sicily. Tied up alongside the 217. 209 on our starboard.

7 February 1944:

At berth Palermo, Sicily.

8 February 1944:

First Beach Battalion consisting of nine (9) men came on board for transportation to Bizerte. Got underway.

9 February 1944:

Underway. 8 knots. Electric storm. Heavy seas. Strong wind and rain.

10 February 1944:

Arrived Bizerte. Tied up alongside the 213, the 212 on our starboard. Disembarked passengers.

11-14 February 1944:

Remained at berth. Re-fueling taking on 9,000 gallons diesel oil, stores and supplies. Minor welding. Got underway for Arzeu, Algeria.

16 February 1944:

Arrived at Arzeu. Berthed astern the 217 with the 213 on our portside.

17-18 February 1944:

Remained at berth.

During this stay at Arzeu I would go ashore with Jim Cookman to the gym. Cookman had been five times Golden Glove Champ of Iowa, either welterweight or middleweight. I forget which. Anyway he showed me how to wrap my hands and use the light bag and the heavy. We would then put on gloves and we would spar. I was lighter and quicker than Jim but he just wanted exercise. Towards the end of the first session he said that he was going to throw three punches and he would then carry me back to the ship. We kind of discussed this a little - like what if he missed the first three punches would he continue?

17-18 February 1944 (continued):

No - Just three punches would be thrown and that would be all. He faked me with a right and landed the first punch with his left. He then picked me up and carried me back to the ship. This continued all the time we were in Arzeu. I have to say that before we finally sailed it did take him three punches before he finally put me away.

19 February 1944:

Proceeded to practice landings with elements of the U.S. 36th Division.

20 February 1944:

Practiced landings.

21 February 1944:

Took station 2000 yards off Ranger Beach to serve as reference vessel.

22 February 1944:

0200 Operations commenced with LCVPs and LCIs landing troops on beach. 0725 Ceased exercises and returned to port.

23-24 February 1944:

Remained in port.

More boxing lessons. Jaw getting tender - at least I don't have to walk back to the ship.

25 February 1944:

1008 Embarked 166 Officers and men of Company "C", 237th Infantry, 85th Division. Underway for beach. 1046 Beached. Proceeded to disembark troops. 1054 Troops ashore. Retracted. Returned to port.

1339 196 Officers and men of Company "E", 338th Infantry, 85th Division onboard for beaching exercises.

1429 In attempting to beach, strong winds and sea set us into LCI(L) 191 who was already beached.

1430 Commenced disembarking troops.

1433 All troops ashore.

1435 Retracted. Underway for Arzeu.

26 February 1944:

Berthed at Arzeu.

27 February 1944:

Took on troops of Company "E", 337th Infantry, 85th Division for beaching exercises. On completion of exercises returned to port.

28 February 1944:

Remained in port.

Another session at the gym. I walked back to the ship - finally.

29 February 1944:

Took onboard Company "I", 338th Infantry, 85th Division. Practiced disembarking via starboard ramp while in port.

1-10 March 1944:

With troops of the 139th Infantry, 85th Division practiced daily landings on various beaches by various means, i.e. by actual beaching or by the use of LCVPs.

Looking back what we have been doing is to train these GIs for future landings on the South of France.

11 March 1944:

Underway for Bizerte, Tunisia.

13 March 1944:

Arrived Bizerte. E.B. Murphy PhM 2/c reported onboard for duty. After a year and a half we finally get medical help.

14-17 March 1944:

Remained in port. IFF recognition gear installed. IFF, Identification, Friend or Foe, finally installed. Just as we had been without medical we had also had been without this necessary piece of equipment.

18 March 1944:

Underway for gunnery practice. Plane towing sleeve.  
#1 Jam. Lack of tension on magazine. 420 rounds fired.  
#2 No jams. 420 rounds fired.  
#3 Jam. Defective ammunition. 48 rounds fired.  
#4 No jams. 120 rounds fired. 1008 rounds expended.  
Plane did fly-by for sleeve inspection. Entered La Goulette for dry dock.

19-21 March 1944:

La Goulette. Dry-dock. Bottom scraped. Two coats of paint applied. Screw replaced. Rudder bushings re-packed.

22 March 1944:

Returned to Bizerte.

23 March 1944:

Gunnery practice.  
#1 gun - jam - defective ammunition - 360 rounds expended.  
#2 gun - jam - defective ammunition - 660 rounds expended.  
#3 gun - jam - defective ammunition - 180 rounds expended.  
#4 gun - jam - defective ammunition - 240 rounds expended.

24-25 March 1944:

Bizerte. Exchanged ammunition. 20 cases HEI and 22 cases HET off. 40 cases HEI and 20 cases HET on.

26 March 1944:

Embarked 44 Army personnel and 8 U.S. Navy Ensigns for transportation to Sicily and Italy.



27 March 1944:

Remained in port due to extremely bad weather.

28 March 1944:

Underway and enroute to Naples via Palermo, Sicily.

29 March 1944:

Arrived Palermo. Disembarked Army personnel.

30 March 1944:

Underway for Pozzuoli, Italy.

31 March 1944:

Arrived Pozzuoli. Disembarked Navy Ensigns. General Quarters sounded at 1805. Secured at 1830.

I was visited by my "dago" friend as soon as we had arrived. Through an interpreter, John Spadafora our motor mechanic, my "dago" said that if this was peacetime and Easter coming it would be a great feast day that would have been celebrated with Pizza. We made a deal that we would supply the makings and his wife would put on a nice spread for the entire ship's crew for Easter. We gave them one hundred pounds of white flour, twenty pounds of sugar, a case or two of canned tomatoes, I forget how many pounds of hamburger and what ever else was needed. I might add that this was done without the knowledge of our Officers.

1 April 1944:

At berth along the quay, Pozzuoli. 0515 General Quarters. 0549 Secured from GQ. 1828 General Quarters. 1900 Secured GQ.

2 April 1944:

Remained along the quay, Pozzuoli. 0515 General Quarters. 0549 Secured from GQ. 1828 General Quarters. 1900 Secured GQ.

This morning when I met with my Italian "buddy" I had to tell him that there would be no Easter celebration. When we pulled out there would be no coming back. It took an argument since he wanted to have the party right now. We finally convinced him that he should use the food to feed his family. A wife and four children in war time Italy could mean that meal times could be very lean. I guess the way it turned out was all for the best. Feeding six hungry people or 24 well fed sailors.

3 April 1944:

Got underway for Bizerte.

6 April 1944:

Arrived Bizerte.

7-10 April 1944:

Alongside pier, La Pecherie, Bizerte.

11 April 1944:

Took on stores. Fresh meat, vegetables, fruit and butter.

12 April 1944:

Received six (6) .50 cal. air-cooled Browning machine guns.

13 April 1944:

Remained at berth La Pecherie, Bizerte.

14 April 1944:

Underway in convoy for Gibraltar.

17 April 1944:

Heavy seas. High wind and rain. Preventers on port ramp gave way. Ramp broke loose and went partially over the side. Deck stanchions knocked loose. Stanchions, hand rails (cable) and portside mooring lines went over the side. Engine room reported port engine quad out due fouled screw. Dropped out of convoy and proceeded to Mers-el-Kebir, Algeria on starboard quad and one screw.

18 April 1944:

Mers-el-Kebir. Divers attempted but were unable to clear screw of cable and manila line.

19 April 1944:

French workers attempted to rig cable so that crane could lift stern clear of water. Unable to clear screw completely.

20 April 1944:

Underway for Oran.

21 April 1944:

0955 Entered dry-dock Oran Harbor.  
1340 Work completed. Both screws free and clear.

22 April 1944:

Transported troops of the 41st Engineering Battalion to an AP in the outer harbor.  
Starboard screw fouled.  
Divers removed manila line. Starboard screw free & clear.

23-29 April 1944:

Remained tied up to the quay, Oran Harbor, awaiting further orders.

30 April 1944:

Underway. Joined large convoy heading for the Straits of Gibraltar.

2 May 1944:

Passed through the Straits. British Dreadnought HMS Centurion joined convoy as guide ship. Convoy turned north for the U.K.

3-7 May 1944:

Proceeding in convoy through the Bay of Biscayne. This is when everyone is really on the lookout. Favorite hunting spot for German U-boats and aircraft from nearby airfields in France.

It was during this time that we had occasion to go alongside the guide ship for food re-supply. They sent over fresh baked bread and what looked like five dog carcasses....Mutton!!! The shocker came when we saw that those big twelve inch guns were nothing but wooden poles. The HMS Centurion was a decoy ship. In case of air attack she would leave the convoy and try to draw the attacking planes away. I learned later that she was full of cork and ping pong balls -- unsinkable. No big guns but loaded with anti-aircraft guns of all sizes.

8 May 1944:

On orders, fell to rear as new convoy forming consisting of all Landing Craft. Submarine contact. Escorts on the hunt dropping depth charges.

10 May 1944:

Detached from Task Group 81.14 with LST 383 and the HMS Centurion with orders to report to Com 12 Fleet.

12 May 1944:

Entered Plymouth Harbor. Made way on various courses up the Salcome River to our anchorage. Went along the starboard side of LCI(L) 5 and tied up to the same buoy.

13-23 May 1944:

Remained moored in the Salcome River, Plymouth, England.

24 May - 1 June 1944:

Shifted ship to a berth in the Tamar River, Plymouth. Received thirty (30) suits of gas protective clothing. I was required to go ashore with either the Skipper or the Exec to attend briefings by Royal Navy Intelligence. I would be briefed on the swept channels and proper courses to the landing beaches. We were also advised that it was quite possible that the Germans might spray the Channel with poison Mustard gas as a last desperate measure. That was the reason for the gas protective clothing. It was also suggested, I don't know from whom it came, that we should shave our heads so that in case of a head wound we would be ready for the Medics. What a wonderful morale booster this was just before combat.

2 June 1944:

Embarked 169 men. Elements of the 1st Battalion, 531st Engineers, Shore Regiment; part of the 286th Signal and 449th Military Police.

3 June 1944:

Underway for the "Far Shore". Proceeded down the Tamar River to bouy "G" and secured to same.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

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

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

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

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

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

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

4 June 1944:

Ordered to return to original anchorage. Proceeded back up the Tamar River to same.

5 June 1944:

1345 Got underway. Proceeded down the Tamar River, formed convoy and by various courses and speeds departed Plymouth Harbor for the "Far Shore". In spite of the heavy seas it appears that there will be no turning back this time.

2048 British Destroyers commenced depth charge attack. Possible submarine in the area.

2055 Second depth charge attack carried out.

6 June 1944:

0803 Reached the "Far Shore". Utah Beach rendezvous area. All engines stopped. Standing by awaiting further orders.

0917 Underway as the 19th wave for Red Beach.

1023 Arrived at the beach as the 17th wave having passed two waves of LCTs. LCT-597 exploded as we were passing on her portside, went down almost immediately. Unable to reach beach because of underwater obstacles. Maintained position outside underwater obstacles awaiting the arrival of LCMs.

1145 2 LCMs on portside and 1 LCM on starboard. Commenced unloading troops.

1157 All troops clear of ship.

1200 Underway for rendezvous area.

1235 LCI(L) 232 immediately astern of us struck a mine. LCIs 216, 214 and Coast Guard cutter going to her aid.

1241 LCI(L) 232 turned over on her side and went under. One Officer and sixteen enlisted men were lost.

1315 Rendezvous area, anchored in seventeen fathoms of water and remained overnight. All hands at battle stations.

We were now spectators with a nice view of all the action. As the day wore on the temperature began to warm up and the gas protective clothing stunk to high heaven, that came off followed by the layers of clothing that we had been required to wear. The layers were supposed to protect us against mustard gas. If we were exposed to it we would remove one layer at a time.

The silence that we had experienced early that morning had now given way to an almost continuous wall of sound. The Battleship Nevada, two Cruisers the Quincy and Tuscaloosa and six destroyers were firing almost continuously with shore batteries replying from time to time. Overhead a stream of bombers returning to England at 500 feet altitude. Everywhere you looked it was a bee-hive of activity. Ships scurrying here and there - some heading for the beach some returning. Twenty-six assault waves were scheduled to land at ten to twenty minute intervals until half an hour after noon.

We just sat there enjoying the sun and watching the show.

7 June 1944:

0700 Ordered to Omaha Beach to tow pontoons. Proceeded as ordered.

0955 Orders changed. Told to stand by. Remained on station awaiting further orders.

1340 Ordered to sail for Portland, England.

8 June 1944:

At berth in Portland.

When we arrived at Portland I had been on duty for 78 continuous hours. Most of the ships crew had done the same.

9 June 1944:

Shifted ship to Weymouth.

10 June 1944:

Remained at berth, Weymouth.

11 June 1944:

Embarked members of the 9th Medical Battalion.

12 June 1944:

Remained at berth in Weymouth.

13 June 1944:

Underway for Utah beach.

14 June 1944:

Arrived at Utah Beach. Stood by while 3 LCVPs ferried troops ashore. Returned to Weymouth.

15 June 1944:

Arrived Weymouth.

16-21 June 1944:

At berth in Weymouth.

Exec gave me a 72 hour pass. London here I come. Decided to look up my cousin, Bill Malia, who was in the RAF just on the outskirts of London. I arrived at his airbase and was informed that they had moved the day before. They wouldn't tell me their new location but a big mouthed sentry at the main gate let the cat out of the bag while I was waiting for a bus. I got the train to Gatwick Airport and there was Aircraft Delivery Squadron #1. It was a Friday and their payday and that meant a party at the Sergeants Mess. I was greeted warmly and was invited to join the fun. However they didn't think that I should be running around in a Yankee sailor suit. They found an RAF uniform my size and decorated it with my "glory bars" or "fruit salad" and we were off for night that neither Bill nor I will ever forget. The Sergeant Pilot playing the piano getting so drunk and slowly dismantling the piano and throwing it out a second story window. I couldn't buy a drink because of the ribbons on my chest - then I found out that the red Navy Good Conduct medal was mistaken for the Victoria

Cross 16-21 June 1944 (continued):

when worn on a British uniform. The ribbon came off NOW. Bad enough to be caught out of uniform but the Victoria Cross?

I believe we all passed out in Bill's car after he missed an exit and we ended up in rolls of barbed wire.

The next day I missed my train and after watching these crazy guys takeoff in their Spitfires and Hurricanes I was given a ride in an open cockpit training plane back to Weymouth.

The few times I have seen Bill Malia since then it is always brought up.

22 June 1944:

Sailed for Portland and thence to Newhaven.

23 June 1944:

Arrived alongside pier, Newhaven.

24-29 June 1944:

Remained at pier. During this period 14 Buzz-bombs were observed heading north presumably for London. One was being chased by two Spitfires.

Was given permission to visit my Aunts and Uncles in Newcastle-on-Tyne. The crew chipped in and I left carrying sugar, tea, butter, gum and lemon drops. A change of underwear in one pocket of my Pea Coat and toothpaste and tooth brush in the other. My young cousin Nora Black was in the hospital with TB and my visit caused quite a stir in her ward. The box of Wrigley gum and the sweets (lemon drops) didn't do any harm. I was told that she was the center of attention for the rest of the time she was in the hospital. She died shortly after my visit.

Her sister, Eileen, and I took the train to Richmond, Yorkshire. My last residence before I left for America eleven years before. The restaurant in the quaint hotel served us after they mistook us for sweethearts and then after the meal would not accept any money. The old girl running the place said she would just touch my collar for luck. I sealed the bargain by giving her a kiss. This is an old English custom - touching a sailor's collar and the kiss.

30 June 1944:

Embarked 142 members of British Pioneer Corp.

1 July 1944:

Sailed for Normandy.

2 July 1944:

Sword Beach, British Sector. Transferred troops to pontoon barges. Returned to Newhaven.

3 July 1944:

Remained at Newhaven.

4 July 1944:

156 members of various elements of the Canadian Army came onboard.

Buzz-bombs observed heading north.  
Underway in company of eleven LCIs

5 July 1944:

Arrived Juno Beach, transferred troops to pontoon barges.  
Returned to Newhaven as guide ship, port column. 8 LCIs astern.

6-12 July 1944:

Newhaven dry-dock. Inspection of hull. Replaced starboard screw. Hull given two coats of paint.

13 July 1944:

Embarked 118 members Canadian Army. Mixed group. Underway for Juno beach.

14 July 1944:

Arrived Juno Beach. Troops disembarked to pontoon barges.  
Underway for Newhaven.  
1835 Destroyer observed firing at object in water. Either E-boat or submarine on surface. 1840 Heavy smoke and occasional fire sighted coming from the object. 1855 Heavy barrage ceases. Object ceases.

15-16 July 1944:

Newhaven.

17 July 1944:

Took onboard 149 mixed Canadian troops. Got underway.

18 July 1944:

1105 Arrived at the artificial harbor of Arromanche.  
Proceeded to discharge troops onto the causeway.  
1210 Unloading completed proceeded to get underway for Newhaven.

19-23 July 1944:

Newhaven.

24 July 1944:

Boarded 100 men from mixed British Regiments. Underway for Arromanches.

25 July 1944:

Arrived Arromanches. Unloaded troops and sailed for Newhaven. While leaving harbor area in swept channel hit an unmarked sandbar. Explosion under stern of ship. Rear steering room taking water. Difficulty keeping station. Rudder appears to have suffered some damage. Shut down starboard engines because of heavy vibrations.



26 July 1944:

Arrived Newhaven.

27 July 1944:

Bottom inspection. Starboard rudder post bent and broken. Hole knocked into steering engine room. Starboard screw badly bent. Center skeg split open.

28 July - 12 August 1944:

Undergoing repairs. During this period Buzz-bombs flying north were a daily occurrence. For the crew, however, it was great. Brighton seaside resort just a few miles away by train. All Allied troops in France. Just a group of Yankee sailors with two years back pay to entertain the locals. Even got invited for a weekend in the country by an English family. John "Suitcase" Simpson, our electrician, became engaged to a lovely girl in the British Army. She is now his wife living in New Jersey.

13 August 1944:

Embarked 165 Officers and men of mixed Regiments. Underway for France.

14 August 1944:

Arrived Gooseberry harbor, British Gold Beach. Discharged troops. Took onboard 87 Officers and men of the British Army. 12 Officers and men of the Royal Navy and 9 Officers and men of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force for transportation to England. These men were all walking wounded.

15 August 1944:

Arrived Newhaven. Disembarked troops. The Sergeant in charge of the British soldiers lined them up on the pier - called them to attention and marched them to the waiting ambulances. We couldn't believe it. Some of these guys could hardly walk but everyone straightened up and parade stepped to the ambulances. Unbelievable.

Got underway and proceeded out into the English Channel for gunnery practice. Plane towing target sleeve failed to appear. All guns fired into water. Returned to the pier at Newhaven.

16-20 August 1944:

Remained at the pier Newhaven.

21 August 1944:

Lt. Donald H. Burch relieved of Command for rotation Stateside.

Lt. Samuel Boyle assumed Command fo ship.

For me this was an early birthday present. If ever an Officer was a model for Captain Queeg of the Caine Mutiny Burch was it.

22 August - 24 September 1944:

Proceeded to put the ship through a series of exercises both in and out of port, for the new Commanding Officer. This was done on a daily basis during this period.

25 September 1944:

Cmdr. R.G. Newbegin, Group Commander, came on board for ship inspection.

First time in two years that this ever happened.

26 September 1944:

Sound of winch starting in forward winch compartment, followed by a loud snap, this was investigated. Forward anchor fell taking all the cable with it due failure to secure bitter end to winch.

Embarked 142 men and 8 Officers of the U.S. Army (Cavalry) for transportation to France. Got underway.

27 September 1944:

Arrived Omaha Beach. Stood-by while troops were taken ashore by LCVPs. Troop unloading completed, sailed for Weymouth.

Arrived Weymouth and anchored in the Solent River.

28 September - 3 October 1944:

Remained in Weymouth.

4 October 1944:

69 Officers and men of the 524th Heavy Maintenance Ordinance came onboard for transportation to France.

Lt. Franklin Schaefer relieved of duties as Engineering Officer for rotation stateside.

Ensign Reiter aboard to assume Engineering Officers duties

5 October 1944:

Underway for Omaha Beach.

7 October 1944:

Arrived Omaha Beach. Troops put ashore. Underway for Weymouth.

8 October 1944:

Arrived Weymouth.

9-23 October 1944:

Remained in Weymouth harbor.

24 October 1944:

Lt. Cmdr. Ayres aboard for thorough ship inspection.

25 October 1944:

Got underway for Belfast, Northern Ireland.

27 October 1944:

Arrived Hamilton Docks, Belfast Northern Ireland.

28-29 October 1944:

Preparing ship for its transfer to the Royal Navy.

30 October 1944:

0600 Reveille of all hands.

0630 Morning chow for all hands.

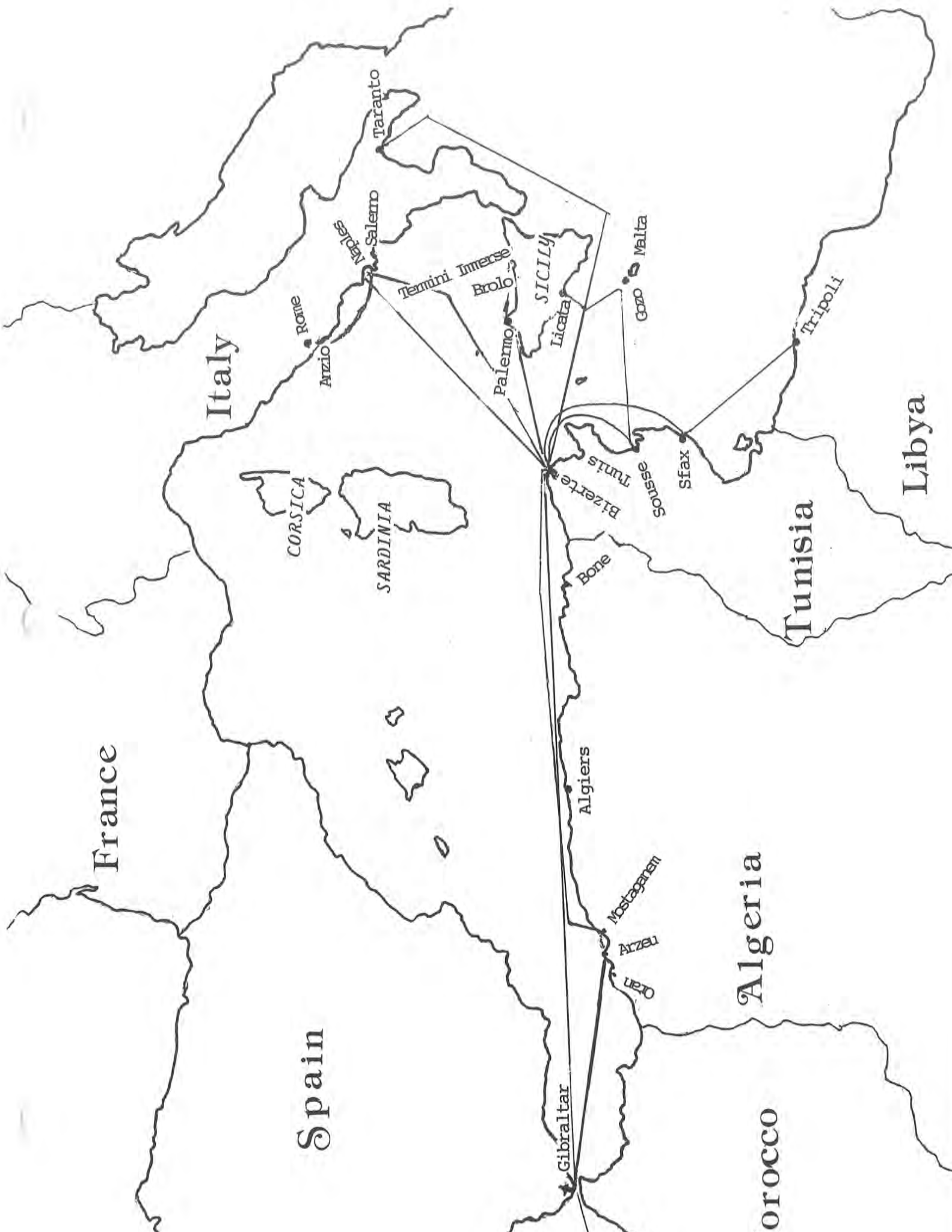
0800 Morning colors.

1030 The USS LCI(L) 215 de-commissioned and turned over to the Royal Navy pursuant to Lend-Lease Act of 11 March 1941.

The following Officers and men were aboard for the de-commissioning ceremonies.

Boyle, S.	Lt. (jg)	USNR	Commanding Officer
Brady, J.T.	Lt. (jg)	USNR	Executive Officer
Reiter, R.W.	Ensign	USNR	Engineering Officer

Way, G.A.	CBM	USNR
Howard, C.C.C.	BM2/c	USNR
Burmeister, E.E.	BM2/c	USNR
Borzon, W.	Cox	USNR
Steele, R.P.	Cox	USNR
Lane, J.	Cox	USNR
Blair, H.B.	GM2/c	USNR
Leonard, J.C.	GM2/c	USNR
Murray, P.	QM1/c	USNR
Land, K.W.	SM2/c	USNR
Smouse, R.M.	SM3/c	USN
McClave, E.O.	S 1/c	USNR-SV
Yarbray, C.E.	S 1/c	USNR-SV
Stempson, I.C.	SC2/c	USNR
Cosbey, J.C.	RM2/c	USNR
Toryk, Fred	MoMM1/c	USNR
Spadafora, J.A.	MoMM1/c	USNR
Holland, K.E.	MoMM3/c	USNR-SV
Corbett, E.	MoMM2/c	USNR
Skowronski, A.	F 1/c	USNR
Simpson, J. E.	EM 1/c	USNR
Anderson, F.D.	StM 1/c	USNR
Murphy, E.B.	PhM 1/c	USNR



France

Italy

Spain

Algeria

Morocco

Tunisia

Libya

CORSICA

SARDINIA

SICILY

Taranto

Salerno

Pome

Arzio

Termini Immerse  
Brolo

Palermo

Licata

Malta  
Gozo

Tripoli

Bizerte  
Tunis

Sousse

Sfax

Bone

Algiers

Mostaganem

Arzeu

Oran

Gibraltar

# EPILOGUE

After leaving the ship we went by train to Larne, north of Belfast, and boarded a ferry for the ride to Stranraer, Scotland. Spent that evening at a British Army Base with what had to be the worst, the lousiest, the most unappetizing food (?) that was ever set in front of man. I don't believe any of us ate whatever it was - that and breakfast was passed.

We left the morning after arriving, by train, for Vicarage Barracks, Plymouth, England to wait for transportation home. I might add that the train ride to the south was enjoyable. Every time the train stopped we were into the tea shop or a tea wagon would be on the platform. We made up for the meals missed at that British Army Base.

We were only at Vicarage Barracks a couple of weeks and the only things that I can recollect now are two incidents. It was a typical English November, cold and damp. The barracks were Quonset huts and each had a coal burning pot belly stove. This would be "banked" every night and the next morning someone would shake down the ashes to the glowing coals and add fresh coal to get a nice roaring fire going. That's what was supposed to happen, if you knew what you were doing. This one particular morning an eager beaver dumped a scuttle (bucket) of what amounted to coal dust on the fire. The result was clouds of smoke since the coal that had been added was damp and too fine. Instead of leaving well enough alone the idiot got a can of kerosene and poured some of that on the top of the smoldering, damp coal. When this soaked its way down the red hot coals there was an explosion that sent the top lid of the stove into the overhead and a stream of coaldust and fire went up the smoke stack. It got everyone out of the sack - like right now.

The other incident involved me; when the Chief Commissary Officer asked me to get a detail together and get the base truck to take us to a nearby farm for fresh produce. I talked some of the guys off the 215 to go with me; pointing out that we could get off the base and there had to be a pub nearby. Chief Bos'n Mate Duke Way, Gunners Mate Harry Blair, Bos'n second Ray Lande and couple of other Petty Officers joined the work party. When we arrived at the farm there was a pub nearby and when we found out that the fresh produce consisted of 2000 pounds of brussel sprouts they all deserted - headed for the pub - and I was left to load the gunny sacks of sprouts onto the truck. They hated brussel sprouts - me? I hated them before, during and after loading them. I got finished just as the pub closed.

We finally were put aboard the troopship USS GENERAL BLACK and headed for the States.

One day while aboard the troopship we were going over some of the things that happened during the past two years and someone asked the Chief Bos'n whatever happened to the wine that we had put into the water casks on the life rafts. While we were in Mostaganem one fine night we did a small raid on the French Navy's wine supply. One guy would keep the French sailor busy and we would tap into these huge 300 gallon barrels of wine. We filled everything we could get our hands on. Mainly jerry cans and when all the clean ones were filled we resorted to the water casks on the life rafts. Trouble is we all forgot the casks and the ship was turned over to the British Navy with wine instead of water in the casks. We were trying to imagine what went on when they had their periodical inspection. Wow, that wine had been aging in oak casks for over a year.

It was also during this crossing that my former Skipper of the 215, Lt. Boyle, asked me to come with him and find a typewriter. He had laid his hands on some special papers that when filled out would entitle the bearer, of same, with the highest priority travel orders that could be obtained. I did a set for him and he gave me a set for my use. Also an extra set of leave papers that could be used for ration stamps.

The arrival in New York Harbor was memorable. We all rushed to the portside - ship kind of listed just a wee bit - and looked at the Statue of Liberty. For me it had been two years since we sailed out of New York past the Lady. Every hat from every head went into the air and over the side.

We were then off the ship and bussed to Lido Beach, Long Island. Processed and given thirty day leaves. I can't remember the exact dates but I do remember that I had to report to the Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia just before the end of the year. Between Christmas and New Years. This meant that I could not be home in San Francisco for Christmas.

The first stop when we left the Lido Beach Naval Base was Sand Street in Brooklyn. Went to a tailor shop and ordered a suit of "tailor makes" with bell bottom trousers and form fitting jumper.

While we were waiting we went into a bar and grill and gazed, with loving eyes, the row on row of whiskey bottles. The English pubs were rationed to one bottle per week and you had to know what day to be there. I remember we sat there and ordered a shot of the bottle at the far left and we kept working our way to the right until the tailor came and told us that our clothes were ready.

Into New York City and United Airlines. Used my "priority" and was put on the top of the list for a flight out that same day. Fog - flight delay - so United told me that they had reserved some Pullman berths and that if I wished to avail myself of one I could leave within the hour and be in Chicago the next morning. Ran out of United's office jumped into a cab and told him "Grand Central Station" on the double. When he turned to talk to me, I told him to save the chatter and get the hell to the station the train was leaving. He just shrugged his shoulders put the cab in gear pulled a U-turn in the street got out, opened my door and said, "Grand Central Station." I was right across the street. Gave him a buck and told him to keep the change.

New York to Chicago by train was the only way to fly. Having just returned from Europe and the invasion of Normandy it was hard to buy a drink. I remember getting into my upper berth - got my shoes and pants off but couldn't remove my jumper. I forgot that it was form fitting with a zipper up one side. Slept with it on.

Chicago to San Francisco on a United DC-3. I think the flight was over 14 hours. I don't believe we past very many cities without stopping. I arrived at United's San Francisco office, Post and Powell, at around 0700. I was standing there trying to get my bearings when two Military Police approached. One was an MP the other an SP. They looked me over and seeing this individual dressed in skin tight dress blues with bell bottoms (non-regulation), black leather jacket (non regulation), white silk scarf and brown leather gloves that had the tops turned down exposing the rabbit's fur (non-regulation), and the dress blue hat (regulation) that was so worn that instead of U.S.NAVY across the front there was a faint lettering that read AVY. They passed me and then returned and asked if I were in the service. I said yes I was in the Navy. They then asked, "What Navy?" I showed my leave papers and the Shore Patrol just groaned and said, "An East Coast Sailor." I was then told that tailor mades were not allowed, the blue dress hat was not allowed, the leather jacket was not allowed, the scarf and gloves had to go and that if this is all I had, I had better change to civvies. That was against regulations but he said in the rig that I was wearing I would be caught in the first sweep of Market Street. I thanked them for the advice - grabbed a cab and went to 135 9th Avenue. Knocked on the door and my mother opened it - took one look at me and said, "shave off your "'tash". She then closed the door. I yelled through the door that I would be only too happy to shave off the mustache if she would just let me in.

My Dad had bought a car, an old Nash, so that I would have wheels when I was home on leave. What a guy.

Saw San Francisco for the first time, really. Remember one day picking up three Marines that were hitch-hiking and they said that they were going to a place called Kezar Stadium to see a football game. The semi-pro San Francisco Clippers were playing the Fort Warren Broncos. After the game I took them home and surprised my folks with three extra for dinner. We already had two sailors from Pontiac that were stationed in SF so what were two more? The Marines were all "out patients" from the local hospital recuperating from wounds received in the South Pacific. I do remember one of them was sitting next to my Dad at the supper table and every time he buttered a roll and put it down my Dad would steal it when he wasn't looking. You can't imagine the look on this poor fellows face - he'd butter a bun - put it down and the next thing you knew it was gone. I think my Dad said something about not putting too much butter on the next one and the Marine turned to him and said, "You're the Son of a -- Sorry ma'm." Mom just said not too worry that was his strange sense of humor.

Used up my Leave and also cashed in one set of Leave Papers for a Ration Book which would help the folks.

United Airlines back to Chicago. 14 Hours. San Francisco, Reno, Salt Lake City, Denver, Cheyenne, Omaha, Cedar Rapids and finally Chicago. The airporter dropped me off in front of the Palmer House Hotel. The Bell boy grabbed my ditty bag and I found myself standing in line at the front desk. I could hear what was being said by those in front of me. No reservations - no room. These guys were all in business suits and they were pulling all sorts of strings, or at least they were trying. I realized how futile this all was so I asked the Bell hop for my bag. He told me to stay in line and when I got to the desk, that Desk Clerk looked me right in the eye and said, "Yes sir how many nights?" I told him just one and he said that the single would be four dollars and would I like to pay in advance. The Palmer House in Chicago had put a certain amount of rooms set aside just for Servicemen. You could own a munitions plant but if you did not have a reservation - no rooms. A lowly GI on leave - a single for \$4 per night.

Got to Pontiac the next day by train and was joined by my brother Alan who hitch-hiked up from Aerial Gunnery School, Memphis, Tennessee. We spent Christmas together. Went to a Christmas dance, had dinner with the Finnell's, out on the farm, and they lent me their Studebaker Champion to drive Alan to Kankakee to catch



a train back to his base. The Finnell's had eight kids and I don't really remember how many went with us to Kankakee but the car was full. Also it was snowing and the roads were covered with ice. It was quite a 50 mile drive, in both directions, under those conditions. Gave my gas ration stamps to the Finnells (second set of leave papers) and the other stamps went to Marie Farrell who was raising a young sister and brother without a mother who had died the year before. Marie was a year behind me in high school and was a very good friend.

Leave over - back to N.O.B. Norfolk and thence transferred to Little Creek Amphibious Base, Virginia Stuck here for three very boring months.

Managed a 72 hour pass once a month and made for Washington, D.C. Then I met an officer from the old flotilla. He pulled strings and I was assigned to new construction with him as the Skipper. Sent to Houston, Texas to put the USS LSM (R) 507 into commission.

Landing Ship Medium (Rockets) an FSS ship. FSS Fire Support Ship that's the Naval terminology, we used to say it stood for First Ship Sunk. It had ten twin tube rocket racks that could spew out five inch rockets at twenty a minute. A turret with a Five inch gun, four twin 40mm six 20mm and two 4.2" Army mortars set in gamble rings. The ship was only a little over 200 feet but we had a crew of better than a hundred and we were equipped with all the latest fire control equipment and radar.

We left Houston and went to Charleston, South Carolina to receive our armament and then to the Chesapeake Bay for our "shake down cruise".

This ship was pretty impressive. Not because of its size but because of its fire power. It was designed for close inshore fire support of troops landing on a hostile beach. At 1500 yards an LSM(R) could lay more ammunition on the beach in fifteen minutes than two Iowa Class Battleships. So you figure that if they had several squadrons of these laying down a protective fire on a hostile beach it would have been pretty devastating. Especially if you take into consideration that there would have been several Iowa Class Battleships plus Carrier planes. This was all planned for the assault on the main Islands of Japan.

While we carrying out these exercises of firing the various guns we all realized that this was going to be for the "big one" - Japan. There were any number of us that had already seen combat. The Skipper was on LCI(L) 217 in the Med. The Chief Gunners Mate, the 1st Class Gunners Mate, and most of the Fire Control men had all been on Battleships or Cruisers during various South Pacific battles. It is safe

to say that we were not all that "gung ho" as we had been two years ago.

We were preparing to form a Flotilla for our transfer to the Pacific Theater of Operations. The United States Army Air Corp dropped a "bomb" on a place called Hiroshima. Blew the whole city off the face of the earth. We danced with joy. There was a report of a false peace and some of the idiots of my bridge gang fired off very pistols and some of the deck gang let go with some of the 20mm. The war was not over and we had some reckoning to do. Those who fired off explosives were charged the price of the shells that they had expended.

We finally get the word -- the WAR is OVER. I remember sitting there in the radio shack with the Chief Radioman Logan; we just sat there and looked at each other. Our exact words were, "We f-----g made it." You cannot imagine our/my emotion of that moment. All the invasions, bombings, enemy actions past and all those that we had anticipated were over - we/I had survived. Four of our shipmates hadn't made it. Many of our close friends were also gone. Jim Logan and I just sat there and cried, "we made it, We made it." When I say cried, I mean tears.

None of us had any reservations about the dropping of an atomic bomb on Japan. That is , when we found out what it was. Even all the horror that it had caused was still joy to us. Harry Truman had ordered the bomb dropped and it had saved U. S. lives. I am firmly convinced that it had saved my life. It sure as hell shortened my enlistment.

The war is over and now we have a little problem with these idiots that think that because that this has happened they are no longer in the Navy. I have or I should say I had a problem. My bridge crew were pretty good, but you always had one that was a "disturber. It has been so long ago but I do believe his name was Gigney (last name). I then had to point out to him and the rest of the Bridge crew that "I" had all the points for discharge and that "they" were still in the U.S.Navy. I was getting out.

Lt. Cmdr. Walser, Captain, asked me to stay onboard for one final voyage. He said that if I would stay on board for a trip that he was ordered to take, he would then give me travel orders to anywhere that I chose.

He then told me that we had orders to proceed to Chicago for Navy Day, October, 1945. He figured that since I had enlisted in Chicago it would be nice to end up in that city. He also told me that I was to take myself off the watch bill and that I would be asked to be around the bridge when he, the Skipper, was in the sack so that the Junior Officers would not screw up.

We set sail from Norfolk, Virginia for Chicago with two or three other LSM(R)s. We were the Flagship and our first stop was Halifax, Nova Scotia; then down, or up, the Saint Lawrence River to the Great Lakes with stops at Quebec, Rochester, Detroit, and finally Chicago. Moored in the Chicago River underneath the Tribune Tower. I believe it was at 222 Michigan Boulevard.

The ship was opened to visitors and they came by the hundreds if not thousands. Bill Daniels and other members of the American Legion from Pontiac came the 100 miles to see the ship. It was great to take your ship to your own home town, so to speak, especially when it was so far from the sea. Bill Daniels was an old crony of my father and quite possibly his best friend in the United States.

The trip back up/down the Saint Lawrence was uneventful. Winter was beginning to set in and we had to get out before ice formed. The River/sea was beginning to get "slushy" in spots. As soon as we hit Norfolk the Skipper was good to his word and I was given orders for Camp Shoemaker in California.

I arrived at Shoemaker the latter part of November and after the usual tests and examinations I was ready for "separations from the service." I remember that I had finally been given my papers of separation - the Honorable Discharge in hand and I was headed for the main gate when I was paged on the loud speaker and told to report to the American Red Cross Office. This was one of the offices that we had to sign off. I can't remember how many others there were but I did rush into the Red Cross Office and without waiting for them to explain why they wanted me - I threw a five dollar bill on the desk and said that was for the glass of milk and the donut that I was given when the troopship arrived from Europe. They could keep the change. The American Red Cross charged us for everything they did for us overseas. I have no love for them. It goes back to WW I. The Vets of that war will tell you that the Salvation Army and the Knights Of Columbus were the givers. The Red Cross sold their service.

I am now "out". A Chief offered me a ride as far as Oakland. I was then picked up by a Naval Officer who gave me a ride across the Bay Bridge. I then got a street car, paid the 7¢ fare and went from the foot of Market Street to 9th and Geary. Made my way to 135 9th Avenue and I was home and out of the service on December 11, 1945.

THE VOYAGE OF FLOTILLA TWO

- 1 -

Now the sailor boys of Flotilla Two  
A hardy lot were they;  
They took their orders from N. O. B.  
And sailed the Chesepeake Bay.

- 2 -

Virginia Beach to Solomons Isle,  
They sailed the waters calm,  
Every night was a keen delight,  
A soft and soothing balm.

- 3 -

But finally there came the word,  
"To sea you boys must go,"  
From all about, came a mighty shout,  
"We'll go if we have to row."

- 4 -

They turned their ships and headed out,  
And took their leave of the bay,  
Cape Henry's light was the last dawn sight,  
They had of the U. S. A.

- 5 -

First came the snow, then the hail,  
The bridge was icy cold;  
Then fog set in as thick as sin,  
While the ships just pitched and rolled.

- 6 -

They couldn't sleep, they couldn't eat,  
They couldn't even stand,  
And quite a bunch just shot their lunch,  
And prayed for the sight of land.

- 7 -

For four long days they had their fill,  
Of each vast ocean wide;  
But soon they found that pretty mound  
Of Bermuda's pretty isle.

- 8 -

With the island men and the island girls,  
They took two weeks of fun;  
Then again got sent and away they went,  
On another hectic run.

- 9 -

They started out from that little isle,  
With cheers and a happy song;  
But through and through not one man knew  
He'd sail on the sea so long.

- 10 -

The wind blew hard and the seas rose high,  
From morn 'till night time late;  
From sailors sick came vomit thick,  
As they yearned for the seas to abate.

- 11 -

For days and days and weeks and weeks,  
They sailed the rough Atlantic,  
In stench and spew they cooked their stew,  
It almost drove them frantic.

- 12 -

Their whiskers grew and their skin got tough  
From the wind and the sun on their faces;  
They learned the the sea when off on a spree  
Was the toughest of all natures cases.

- 13 -

At six slow knots they bounced along,  
They banged, they pitched, they listed,  
Upside down and round and round  
They staggered, turned and twisted.

- 14 -

They stood their watch with bloodshot eyes,  
A grim and determined lot  
For they showed no light when they sailed at night,  
For a sub to take with a shot.

- 15 -

They changed their course in the black of night,  
With ships all around.....every side,  
They cussed and swore like sailors of yore,  
While they prayed that they wouldn't collide.

- 16 -

They drank stale water, they ate canned food  
Each day at the chow time call;  
The scum and dirt rolled off their shirt  
For they had no bath at all.

- 17 -

For three long weeks they bounced along,  
Through storm and the wind and the rain;  
Soon they laughed at the sea with a mirthless glee,  
As they bounced o'er the bounding main.

- 18 -

The Chesepeake boys of Flotilla Two,  
Soon became salty lads of the sea,  
For they took it in stride on a very long ride  
Like men of the old Ny-vee.

- 19 -

When the war's all over and the tales unfold,  
Of things that the sailor men do;  
I tell you indeed, not one will exceed  
That voyage of Flotilla Two.

- 20 -

So maybe we'll gather together some day,  
With a glass in our hand as men do;  
And with pard'nable boast, we'll all drink a toast  
To the LCI (L) of Flotilla Two.

Author: Cmdr. L. S. Sabin  
Flotilla II Commander  
February 1943

UNITED STATES SHIP

LCI (L) 215

SUN  
(Day)4  
(Date)JUNE  
(Month)

1946

## REMARKS

0015 Moved to buoy "GEORGE"  
0025 LCI (L) 216 moved to our port side.  
0035 YMS 346 moved to the port side of LCI (L) 216.  
0700 Reville of all hands.  
0730 Morning show.  
0731 Barrage balloon secured to fantail.  
0800 Morning show.  
0910 Got underway from buoy "GEORGE" proceeded up the Tama  
River using various courses and speeds conforming to the  
channel.  
10<sup>15</sup> Moved to tract #13.  
1035 LCI (L) 212 moved to our port side.  
1200 Noon show.  
1730 Evening show.  
2230 Evening colors.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

U. S. N. COMMANDING

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

5 June 1944

- 1345 Got underway from buoy 13 as directed by CinC.  
Standing down the Tamar River using various courses  
and speeds conforming to the channel.
- 1400 Bar 29.79 DB 62 WB 57 Wind SW Weather 3
- 1356 All troops below decks
- 1520 Left the harbor of Plymouth
- 1530 Course 190
- 1555 Course 105
- 1600 Bar 29.79 DB-60 WB-56 Weather 3
- 1700 Bar 29.80 DB-61 WB-57 Weather 3  
Proceeded according to schedule on course 105 T.
- 1741 Course 036
- 1830 Course 067
- 1900 Proceeding on course 067
- 2005 Changed to course 087
- 2048 British DD carried out depth charge attack off port column  
of convoy.
- 2055 Second attack by DD carried out.
- 2100 Bar 29.76 DB-57 WB-55  
Course 087
- 2200 Bar 29.76 DB-54 WB-56 Weather 3 Wind NW-2  
Course 087
- 2207 Changed course to 110
- 2300 Bar 29.76 WB-56 DB-57  
Course 110
- 2330 Flares observed four points off starboard bow.
- 2345 Flashes observed on the horizon one point forward of  
starboard bow.
- 2400 Bar 29.76 DB-56 WB-56  
Continued on course 110.



UNITED STATES SHIP

(Day) (Date) (Month) 19

(1-25), '56

## REMARKS

0800 Morn'g Colors.  
 1200 Noon chow  
 1345 Hot underway from buoy #13 as directed by C in C. Standing down the Tamar River using various courses and speeds conforming to the channel  
 1356 All Troops ordered below decks  
 1520 Left the harbor of Plymouth  
 1530 Course 190°T  
 1555 Changed to course 105°T  
 1700 Proceeding according to schedule on course 105°T  
 1741 Course changed to 036°T  
 1830 Changed course to 087°T  
 2048 British DD carried out depth charge attack off port column of convoy  
 2055 Second attack by destroyer carried out.  
 2207 Changed course to 110°T  
 2330 Flashes observed from points off starboard bow  
 2345 Flashes observed in horizon the point forward of starboard beam.  
 2400 Continued on course 110°T.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

U. S. N. COMMANDING.

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

June 6

0000-0400 Continued on course 110

0525 Course changed to 069

0555 Course changed to 090

0600 Bar 29.71 DB54 WB-52 Wind SSW Weather 3

0803 Stopped all engines and dropped anchor

0917 Got underway, proceeded via swept channel to the beach-head.

1000 Course 245

1023 ~~XXXXXX~~ Speed Zero

1030 Speed one

1032 Speed Zero

1046 Speed one

1047 Speed two

1100 Speed Zero

1110 Speed three

1117 Speed Zero

1145 Two LCM's came alongside on port and one LCM on starboard. Commenced unloading troops.

1157 All troops disembarked into small boats. LCM's pulled away and proceeded into the beach.

1200 Got underway and proceeded to LCI (L) rendezvous.

1235 LCI (L) 232 struck a mine. Began to settle by the stern.

1241 LCI (L) 232 went down. LCI's 216, 214 and Coast Guard cutter picking up survivors.

1315 Anchored in assigned anchorage

1817 Dragging anchor---Moved to a more suitable holding ground.

2210 Dragging anchor--Moved to a more suitable holding ground.

2400 Remained at anchor.

UNITED STATES SHIP

TUES  
(Day)6  
(Date)JUNE  
(Month)

1944

## REMARKS

0000-0400 Continued on course 110°T  
 0525 Course changed to 069°T  
 0555 Course changed to 090°T  
 0803 Stopped all engines. Anchored as previously instructed. Standing by awaiting turn to go in to the beach.  
 0917 Hot underway, proceeded via swept channel to beach-head.  
 1000 Course 245°  
 1023 Spud jws. Maintained position waiting for LCM's to unload troops.  
 1145 Two LCM came alongside on port and One LCM alongside on starboard. Troops commenced to load LCM's.  
 1157 All troops disembarked into LCM. LCM pulled away and proceeded to the beach.  
 1200 Hot underway proceeded to LCI Underways and anchorage.  
 1235 LCI (L) 232 struck a mine. Began to settle by the stern.  
 1241 LCI (L) 232 went down. LCI's 216, 214 and boat hoist cutter picking up survivors.  
 1315 Anchored in assigned anchorage.  
 1817 Dragging anchor. Moved to a more suitable holding ground.  
 2210 Dragging anchor. Moved to a more suitable holding ground.  
 2400 Remained at anchor.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

U. S. N. COMMANDING.

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

UNITED STATES SHIP

Wed. 7 JUNE, 1944  
(Day) (Date) (Month)

## REMARKS

0945 Prepared to get underway.  
 0955 Dropped the anchor. Proceeded into the lead as directed to two portons.  
 1005 General Quarters.  
 1018 Secured from General Quarters.  
 1130 Spent 7 hrs. Received change of orders.  
 1340 Underway on course 005°T as organized by LCI's 214, 232, 216, 215.  
 1409 Course 218°  
 1415 Course 021°  
 1430 Course 048°  
 1450 Course 025°  
 1545 Course 035°  
 1557 Course 000°  
 1615 Course 300°  
 1918 Course 290°  
 2116 Course 304°  
 2245 Entered the harbor of Portland England  
 2310 Tied up to the starboard side of LCI (W) 214  
 2320 LCI (W) 251 Tied up to our starboard side.

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

U. S. N. COMMANDING OFFICER

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

UNITED STATES SHIP

LCI (L) 315

Monday 20 October 1944

(Day)

(Date)

(Month)

## REMARKS

0600 Reveille of all hands  
 0630 Morning colors for all hands  
 0800 Morning colors  
 1030 The USS LCI(L) 315 de-commissioned and turned over to the Royal Navy pursuant to treaty terms set of 11 March 1944

The following officers and men were aboard for decommissioning ceremony:

Boyd, S. Lt (jg) USNR Commanding Officer  
 Baily, J.T. Lt (jg) USNR Executive Officer  
 Ruter, R.W. Enr. USNR Engineering Officer

Way, H.H.	CRM	USNR
Narwood, C.C.	BM 3/c	USNR
Burmister, E.E.	BM 3/c	USNR
Bryson, W.	Cox	USNR
Stille, R.P.	Cox	USNR
Lane, J.	Cox	USNR
Blair, N.B.	GM 3/c	USNR
Leonard, J.C.	GM 3/c	USNR
Murray, P.	QM 1/c	USNR
Lund, K.W.	SM 3/c	USNR
Smouse, R.M.	SM 3/c	USNR (PM)
M <sup>r</sup> Clove, E.O.	S 1/c	USNR - SV
Yarbo, C.E.	S 1/c	USNR - SV
Stimpson, S.C.	SC 2/c	USNR
Cooley, J.C.	PM 3/c	USNR
Zink, Fred	M <sup>o</sup> MM 1/c	USNR
Sealaforn, J.A.	M <sup>o</sup> MM 1/c	USNR
Holland, R.E.	M <sup>o</sup> MM 3/c	USNR - SV
Corbett, E.	M <sup>o</sup> MM 3/c	USNR
Skawonski, A.	F 1/c	USNR
Simpson, J.P.	EM 1/c	USNR
Anderson, F.D.	STM 1/c	USNR
Murphy, E.B.	PHM 1/c	USNR

APPROVED:

EXAMINED:

*Seavel Boyd*  
 U. S. N. COMMANDING

U. S. N. NAVIGATOR

