

50 copies filed in Ship's Office.

Contributed by Alan K. Johnson
HISTORY OF USS CLARKE COUNTY (LST-601)

Built by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Works at Seneca, Illinois, LST-601 was first commissioned on 25 March 1944 at New Orleans, Louisiana. Her first Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Commander Frank M. Perrin, USNR.

After being commissioned, the ship was ordered to the Mediterranean where in June, she participated in practice landings at Salerno in preparation for the invasion of Southern France. With Lieutenant Joseph W. HOTCHKISS, USNR, in command, LST-601 earned one battle star for her initial landing in August by delivering six apex boats with demolition teams and elements of the Third U.S. Infantry. She transported 317 prisoners of war on her return from this action. In the following months, she provided logistic support for the invasion, ferrying supplies into Marseilles and Toulon, France. During November and December, 1944, the ship supported the Greek revolution by transporting British troops and supplies into Athens.

In the following spring, LST-601 became the first ship flying the Stars and Stripes to enter Trieste, Italy. Generals Mark Clark, Omar Bradley and Lucient Truscott and their British contemporaries, Field Marshall Alexander and Admiral Cunningham visited the ship during the Trieste incident.

On 3 July 1945, LST-601 departed the European Theatre and arrived at Davisville, Rhode Island, on the 18th. She then proceeded to Port Arthur Texas, where command was assumed by Lieutenant Fred R. EISEMAN, Jr. USNR, on the 5th of August.

At the close of World War II, the ship remained in active service under Commander Amphibious Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. As a unit of Landing ship Flotilla TWO, she took part in training exercises from the Chesapeake Bay area to the Caribbean until January 1949, when, proudly, exhibiting the Navy "E" for Battle Efficiency Competition, she reported to the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean for duty. From January until May the ship visited ports in Spain, France, Morocco, Malta, Italy and Greece, and for this tour of duty she received the Navy Occupation Service Medal.

Upon her return to Little Creek Virginia, she took part in the Amphibious training of Annapolis Midshipmen and West Point Cadets. Back in Landing Ship Flotilla TWO, the LST-601 took part in every variety of amphibious operations from Laborador to Puerto Rico.

In the summer of 1952, with Lieutenant William A. WHITEHOUSE, Jr., USN, as Commanding Officer, she spent four months in Greenland participating in Operation Sunac.

From then until June 1955, her activities consisted mainly of amphibious exercises off Onslow Beach, North Carolina, and periodic trips to Vieques, Puerto Rico.

In May of 1953, Lieutenant Lloyd A. HAMMER, Jr, USN, took command of the LST-601. He remained until relieved by Lieutenant Commander Hugh C. MASON in July 1954.

On 1 June 1955, the LST-601 entered Phase Able of inactivation at Colonna Shipyard, Norfolk, Virginia. The work of inactivation was interrupted on 1 July by the ceremony officially giving the ship the name of CLARKE COUNTY.

On 24 August 1955, the USS CLARKE COUNTY reported to the Commander Florida Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet, at the U.S. Naval Station Green Cove Springs, Florida for Phase Baker of inactivation.

On 23 November 1955, the CLARKE COUNTY was placed out of commission in reserve at Green Cove Springs, Florida.

On 17 August 1961, the CLARKE COUNTY left Green Cove Springs, Florida for transfer to the Texas Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet, Orange, Texas.

On 7 September 1963, the CLARKE COUNTY left the Texas Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet and was transferred to Philadelphia Group at Philadelphia, Pa.

On 28 December 1965, the CLARKE COUNTY was transferred to New York Ship-Building Corporation, Camden, New Jersey, for modernization and re-habilitation.

After leaving the shipyard, the CLARKE COUNTY returned to Philadelphia for outfitting. There, on 28 July 1966, she was recommissioned with Lieutenant Harold A. GOLDSBERRY, USN, as Commanding Officer.

Making a brief stop at Earle, New JERSEY, to load ammunition, the ship headed for Little Creek, Virginia, for eight weeks of refresher training conducted by the Amphibious Operations Training Unit at U. S. Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia.

After completing her refresher training on 6 October 1966, the ship got underway for her new home port on Guam, as a part of Landing Ship Squadron THREE. After crossing the Caribbean and the Pacific loaded with an Army LCU, she arrived in the Marianas Islands on 24 December 1966.

On 31 December 1966, the CLARKE COUNTY was underway again, this time bound for Saigon to offload the LCU. When this was completed, the ship steamed up the Vietnamese coast to DaNang, where she was assigned to the Naval Support Activity, making shuttle runs to Chu Lai.

On 8 January, the ship left DaNang for Subic Bay with a load of CONEX Boxes and vehicles in need of repairs. After one day in the Philippines, the LST-601 began her trip to Hong Kong for a five day period of rest and recreation - her first since leaving the yards.

Returning to Guam on 3 March, the CLARKE COUNTY entered a three week period of restricted availability at the Ship Repair Facility, Guam. On 28 March she was again underway, this time loaded with emergency supplies for the typhoon-stricken island of Koror in the Palau Group of the Caroline Islands.

After leaving Koror, the ship returned to DaNang, where she took part in Operation Oregon, as well as supporting Naval Support Activity, DaNang. In addition to Chu Lai, she also made runs to Qui Nhon and Cua Viet.

On 26 May, the CLARKE COUNTY returned to Guam after a six day R&R period in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Having spent this time for upkeep, on 19 June she left for a trip to Chi Chi Jima in the Bonin Islands. She was loaded with two refrigeration units which were filled with 10 tons of frozen fish in Chi Chi Jima to be transported to Guam. She returned to Guam on 1 July to offload her new cargo.

After off loading, CLARKE COUNTY returned again to Viet Nam, supporting Navy and Coast Guard patrol boats in the Mekong River Delta. A brief trip to Hong Kong and return to Guam followed.

After a brief overhaul, the ship returned to Viet Nam again, arriving 10 October. After a month of cargo hauling operations, she proceeded to beach at Duc Pho, RVN, in support of American and Korean Army troops. While she was attempting this crucial beaching in heavy surf conditions, the ship's stern anchor cable became entangled in her starboard screw and she broached, receiving extensive hull damage. After five weeks of salvage operations in Duc Pho and DaNang, the CLARKE COUNTY was towed to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, for emergency repairs and then to Guam for major overhaul. She arrived in Guam on 21 January 1968 and started repairs.

On 9 May, LT John W. BLACK, USN, assumed command.

On 3 August, CLARK COUNTY was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation as a unit of Landing Ship Squadron THREE. The award was made "for meritorious service from 1 July 1966 through 31 March 1968 during combat support operations in the Republic of Vietnam. Landing Ship Squadron THREE transported over 336 million pounds of cargo, 5,900 vehicles, and 10,000 troops in direct support of military operations ashore".

On 29 November, the overhaul was completed and the ship left for Yokosuka, Japan, for Refresher Training and Amphibious Refresher Training.

Upon completion on 3 February 1969, CLARK COUNTY left Yokosuka for Subic Bay, stopping at Okinawa and Kaohsiung to load cargo. Arriving in Subic Bay on 14 February, the ship commenced a 3 week upkeep period and then left to haul cargo for Naval Support Activity Danang for two and a half weeks