

Monday, April 11, 1955

Gunston Hall, 855 End Evacuation Duty Tour

Two PhibPac ships, both major evacuation veterans, are slated to conclude Far Eastern tours of duty during mid-April.

The USS LST 855 was scheduled to arrive in San Diego April 9, followed by the USS Gunston Hall (LSD-5) on April 17.

The 855, commanded by Lt. R. R. Justice, was preceded earlier in the month by three other components of LanShipRon-5, the LSTs 1159, 772 and 516.

A veteran of the major portion of Operation "Passage to Freedom," the 855 also was involved in the more recent Tachen Islands evacuation. She made two trips from the Tachens to Keelung, Formosa, loaded with evacuees and equipment. The 855 is returning a detachment of the First Marine Division.

The Gunston Hall has been occupied primarily during her tour with the final phases of Operation "Passage to Freedom," having operated in Indochina from November to February.

Proud owner of nine battle stars earned during WWII where she participated in nearly every major amphibious assault from the Marshalls through Okinawa, the Gunston Hall is commanded by Cdr. R. J. Duryea.

LST 855 Styled for Modern Navy; Program Adds Comfort for Crew

By Virgil Gregg, JOSH

The Japanese call her the "Hachi-Go-Go," the crew fondly refers to her as the "Happy-T" and the Navy officially named her the USS LST 855.

One of the ships being used in the Navy's habitability program, the "Hachi-Go-Go" boasts a new after-crew's messing area and new additions throughout the ship. Formerly a berthing space, the new mess hall is fitted with yellow Formica table tops, cream-colored leatherette couches, and green linoleum tile. When divine services are observed, the chapel takes the place of the TV theater which is located in one corner of the messing area.

C. E. Bone, EM1, one of four recommissioning plank-owners still on board, cited other 855 "firsts"

including the crew's washroom where shaving cream and hand soap dispensers are the vogue. Writing tables have also been installed in every berthing space. Another habitability innovation has been the installation of "Easy-eye" lamp shades throughout the ship.

G. M. Smith, BMC, former ATSU instructor at the NAB, calls the 855 "the cleanest 'T' I've seen." Proof of that could start with the immaculate medical department. With stainless steel deck and green tile bulkheads, the ship's aches and pains are soothed by L. J. Ciancio, HM1, and R. L. Craddock, HN.

"We've got a fine ship," said Lt. R. R. Justice, skipper of the 855, "and it stems from the high morale. You've got to have pride

to have good morale and we have both."

Part of the plans for the future, according to Lt. Justice and C. A. Taylor, ME1, is the only "sea-going" railroad in the amphibs. A model railway is in the planning stage to ease the time on long cruises. Also a hobby shop which will carry model airplanes, leather supplies and other material is planned.

Sports fever runs high on the 855 also. "Every time we pulled into Japan," said Bone, "if the battlegoon New Jersey was around, we were sure of having our softball team exercised. They were our favorite opponents. But our record can speak for itself. We have won 36 and lost 13 games in the four years we've been in commission."

A clean, happy ship, the 855 has had a varied and interesting tour since her recommissioning January 29, 1951. She carried refugees from the islands northwest of Korea to a camp in the southern part and transported supplies to the prison camp on Kojima Island. December of 1951 saw her transporting the 27th Regimental Combat Team from Inchon to Kojima.

The 855 also saw action in the evacuation of Indochina when she made nine runs to and from the evacuation area. In one trip she carried 2,400 Vietnamese refugees from Haiphong to an MSTS ship for further transportation to freedom in the south.

It was during this evacuation that the 855 became an unexpected maternity ward for two young Vietnamese women. The first baby was born just before departure time but the second was a little bit out of the ordinary. During a storm at sea, the baby was born under a truck on the main deck.

The "Happy-T" arrived in San Diego from WestPac April 9 with a full cargo of Marines and equipment from Inchon. She also took part in the Tachen Islands Evacuation.



PLANNING BOARD—Members of the LST 855's Career Planning Board congregate in the ship's revamped CPO quarters to discuss future habitability improvements. Left to right are C. A. Taylor, ME1; Lt. R. R. Justice, skipper of the 855; G. M. Smith, BMC; G. J. DeLago, BM1; and C. E. Bone, EM1.



CHOW TIME — Noon meal is served in the 855's new mess area. The space doubles as a chapel and television theater.

Naval Vessel Now Named For Kent County

As of July 1, the USS LST 855 became the USS Kent County (LST 855) as the result of an order of the Secretary of the Navy to name all LST's after counties.

Lt. R. R. Justice, commanding officer of the newly named ship, said: "The officers and crew of the LST 855 are proud to have our ship named USS KENT COUNTY, since we feel that a ship with a name rather than merely a number will be a great morale booster for the ship's crew. In addition the event offers an excellent opportunity for a close liaison between the ship and the people of Kent County, with resultant morale benefit."

The ship's home port is in San Diego, California and Lt. Justice has extended an invitation to the citizens of Kent to visit the ship when in that vicinity. He also indicates that members of the ship's crew will be glad to hear from or correspond with Kent countians.

The LST is an amphibious ship 328 feet length overall by 52 foot beam. She has a crew of approximately 90 officers and men. Her speed is in the vicinity of 19 knots. The ship has considerable cargo carrying space with a tank deck nearly 250 feet long, and a main deck of approximately 150 feet. The LST's primary mission is to deliver to combat objective area tanks, trucks, or whatever cargo she may be carrying. In fulfilling her mission the LST actually hits

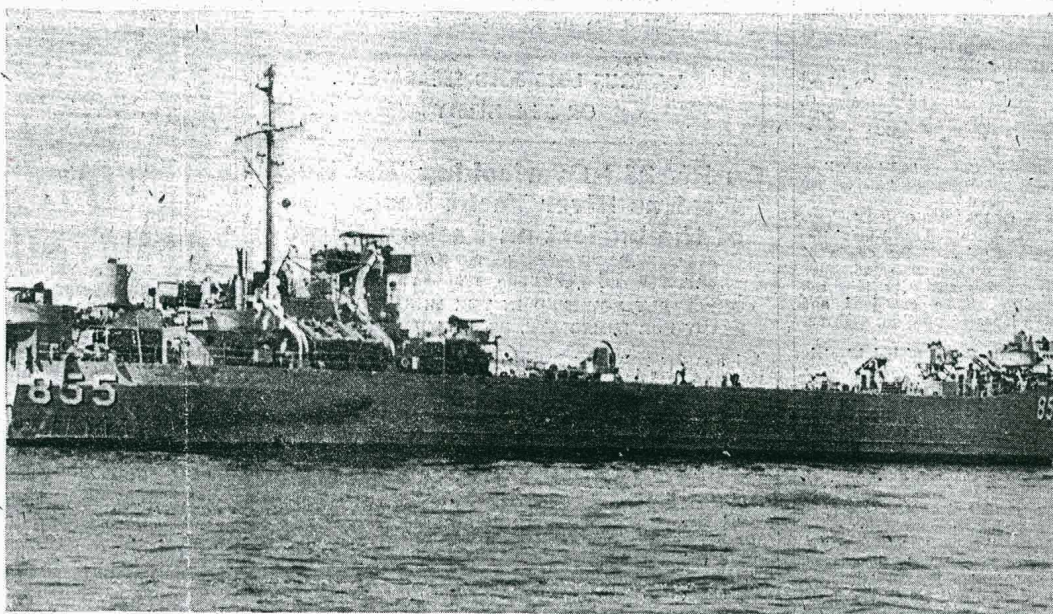
the beach, opens her bow doors, lowers her ramp and off-loads cargo.

The USS KENT COUNTY (LST 855) was recommissioned

in November 1950, after a period of post World War II inactivation. During the period 1951 to 1952, this ship was active in the defense of South Korea, parti-

cipating in many operations including the evacuation of Pen Yong Do. Returning to Korea in late 1952, the LST 855 participated in numerous logistic sup-

port landings. Recently the ship returned from the Far East having taken a very active part in the evacuation of Northern Indo-China and the Tachen Islands.



USS KENT COUNTY NOW OFFICAL NAME OF FORMER LST 855, TWO WAR VETERAN