

"This here's our captain," he said, introducing Ensign William Thomas, 21, of Honey-Grove, Tex. There were no other officers and they called each other by their first name. "You could stow your gear in our cabin," said Ensign Bloom, "only something went wrong with the bilges. She stinks something awful."

Most of the crew of twelve enlisted men were at a movie on the island, their first in two months. "We don't have any recreational facilities except books and we've read them all, said Ensign Thomas. "Can't you tell us any news? We haven't heard anything since MacArthur invaded the Philippines—we used to take in San Francisco on the radio, but it runs down our batteries."

#### Like a Floating Washtub

An LCT is about 100 feet long, looks like a floating washtub with its superstructure aft and a bow that lets down in a ramp. It can't go a long distance by itself, as it is usually carried on the deck of an LST, landing ship, Tanks, which is a much larger vessel of the same idea. It is launched sidewise on D-day, runs up to the beach, lets down her ramp on the sand and delivers her tanks.

When the beach is secured, all the war is over for the average LCT except the dirty beach-breaking part.

She can't be loaded again to the deck of an LST without a special crane, so she stays for the duration at that beach, wherever it is, and unloads the ships, sometimes working twenty hours a day.

On Peleliu, first combat for LCT 999, the crew had the satisfaction of seeing their load of tanks knock out a Japanese pillbox right after they had waddled down the ramp. Then the LCT was rocked by a bomb fifty feet off her bow. Now her day of combat is over and her wounds are many. These are the occupational ailments of an LCT.

A tour of the "ship" doesn't take long. Ensign Bloom pointed to a little den forward. "That's where Bill and I sleep," he said. "This is the galley and mess hall—we eat in here with the crew. This refrigerator here holds a three-day supply of food. When we get any fresh meat we have to cook it all at once, store it in the refrigerator and serve it warmed up. We can only keep fresh foods for three days' meals. And after that we don't have any fresh food."

Fresh water, food and all the other necessities of life have to be begged from the big ships, the ones that have names. Drinking water is forced through the pipes by working a gadget like an old farm pump. When you shower you stand under the nozzle and pump, pump, pump. "Almost too much work," said Ensign Bloom.

#### Crew Meets The Press

Old 999 had one improvised comfort, a platform built from gunwale to gunwale as a place to sun and sit and play cards in the infrequent leisure. The crew gathered there tonight to meet the first correspondent every known to show any interest in 999.

The roll isn't long. Boatswain's Mate Second Class F. K. Renick of Foristell, Mo.; Gunner's Mate M. Malinsky of Philadelphia; Quartermaster Third Class D. R. Hottenroth of Jamaica, Queens; Motor Machinist Third Class G. R. Morisky of Cleveland; Motor Machinist Second Class E. T. Lihan of Cleveland; Electrician's Mate Third Class D. D. Robbins, Batesville, Ind.; Ship's Cook Third Class H. C. Lundy of Denver; Motor Machinist Second Class A. A. De Socio, Brooklyn; Seaman First Class Joe Campisi of Tampa, Fla.; Seaman First Class Acton of Philadelphia; Seaman J. M. McCollister of Dansville, N. Y.; Seaman First Class W. H. Carr of Bristol, Va., and Snookie, the ship's dog, who has spent three weeks of her eight months' life ashore.

Running an LCT is a hard life in dungarees months on end, take it from any of these boys. But they have pride in their ignored, beaten-up ship and they have given her a name—Jeanie—after the skipper's girl.

There's the big splendid aircraft carrier, preparing to lower a Jacob's ladder for the correspondent.