

HISTORY OF LCT 1329

Our World War II ship – Landing Craft Tank No. 1329 – waited half-a-world away, in Milne Bay, New Guinea.

It had been delivered, by transport, and was anchored, along with a sister-ship, at the southern tip of New Guinea.

Meanwhile, our crew was being formed at Solomons, Maryland Amphibious Base late in 1944.

Under Ensign Thomas Galloway of Detroit, the new crew was destined to board LCT 1329 on January 5, 1945.

Most sailors already claimed “veteran status,” having served in the U. S. Navy at least a year, before coming together for this mission.

The 15-man crew included:

Quartermaster 3/c Charles (Don) Lindstrom of Holdrege, Nebraska.

Seaman 1/c Albert Apel of Louisville, Kentucky.

Seaman 1/c Richard (Cookie) Halper of Chicago, Illinois.

Seaman 1/c Alfred Rich of Newark, New Jersey.

Seaman 1/c Aubrey Morgan of Andalusia, Alabama.

Seaman 1/c Elvin Bean of Noxen, Pennsylvania.

Seaman 1/c Henry Glasscock of Harrison, Ohio.

Seaman 3/c Ray Kennedy of Winchester, Indiana.

Seaman 3/c Glenn Peterson of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Fireman 1/c Frank Biedka of New Castle, Pennsylvania.

Fireman 3/c Milton Peresmik of Bronx, New York.

Fireman 2/c Paul Meister of Canton, Ohio.

Fireman 1/c Anthony Budrejko of New Britain, Connecticut.

Joining just before departure from the Washington, D. C. area was executive officer Ensign David Silverman of New York City. Later in the South Pacific, Fireman 3/c Richard Heidenreich of Flint, Michigan joined as a replacement.

Following a cross-country train ride from Maryland to California, the crew assembled at Mare Island Naval Base for deployment to the South Pacific.

Boarding the converted Matson liner, U. S. S. Lurline, at San Francisco, the crew set sail on Thursday morning, December 14, 1944.

No one saw land again for 13 days.

We crossed the International Date Line on December 23, at which time special ceremonies were held aboard the Lurline for an equator crossing. On December 27, we landed at Nuomea, New Caledonia, then left four days later from the Australian coast across the Coral Sea to Milne Bay on January 4.

We faced a seven-day time-schedule to ready our craft into shipshape condition to sail north along the New Guinea coast. Then, we left for Lae, Finnhafen and Hollandia on January 8.

On February 18, a tragic accident occurred that took the life of MoMM 3/c Tony Budrejko. He became a victim of a Japanese sniper, while the ship was anchored near Hollandia.

Heidenreich became his replacement one week later.

LCT 1329 assumed “gofer” duties during February and March, and transported cargo to Aitape, New Guinea.

During the second week of April, a flotilla of ships, including cruisers, destroyers and landing craft, sailed to Morotai Island in the Moluccas, and arrived on April 11. Our ship was detailed to deliver supplies during the following month.

A large convoy, loaded with gasoline, ammunition and bombs, left Morotai on May 11 for an invasion of Tarakan Island, Borneo. Participation of the invasion was to occur under Australian command.

Our beach landing was extremely dangerous, as the island was approached from the mainland side in heavy current. It came under heavy Japanese artillery, and the approach was littered with underwater obstacles.

Several landing craft were sunk by enemy artillery displacements on Tarakan. Our ship was struck by gunfire several times, but came through without major damage.

(A separate invasion account accompanies this history).

All American ships were granted via loan by the U. S. 7th Fleet to Australian command following a request for small-ship participation.

While our LCTs faced danger upon participating, they unfortunately received no commendation from Australian or U. S. 7th Fleet. The crews did not receive special combat ribbons or battle stars for this Borneo campaign.

Following that dangerous invasion action, our ship was then assigned to several “gofer” trips to Tawi-Tawi, Philippines in the Sula Archipelago.

Later, on July 8, D-day-plus-six, we delivered supplies to Balikpapan, Borneo across and below the equator.

Following more hops to Tawi-Tawi and returns to Tarakan, the ship finally left for Leyte Gulf to anchor in San Pedro Bay near Tacloban. News had already floated around that our ship was destined for participation in the future invasion of the Japanese mainland as orders came down to clear the craft of all flammable material.

But, it was near Tacloban on the evening of August 10 that all vessels received the most-welcome news of all -- an impending Japanese surrender following what we understood was a single-bomb atomic attack on Hiroshima, Japan.

Thousands of ships in Leyte Gulf celebrated, with a victory display of skyrockets, flares, bells and horns, along with sailors’ personal tears of joy.

On August 11, our LCT 1329 was ordered to Guiuan, Samar, where it was assigned to loading and unloading liberty ships. Later it sailed for Cebu Island with a cargo of reconstruction material. On October 4 it went to Maribojoc, Bohol Island with a cargo of Philippine thatch singles.

Later we were assigned to deliver Japanese POWs to a Philippine prison on Cebu Island.

Before returning to Tacloban, the crew salvaged a fully-intact jeep from a watery grave, and it later became an essential addition for our crew use.

On October 16 our landing craft arrived at Guiuan where some members of the crew joined “high-point” soldiers and sailors, enroute to a Samar receiving station for transport back to the United States for discharge.

Leaving our ship’s crew for return to the States then were Apel and Bean, and on November 1 three more sailors departed – Rich, Peresmik and Morgan.

During the next two months, the 1329 did shuttle hauling between Tacloban and Guiuan.

On December 15, QM 2/c Lindstrom suffered an amputation of his left-hand index finger in an on-board accident, and his hospitalization resulted in the first skin-graft surgery of the entire Pacific war.

With several crewmen departing for state-side discharge during early 1946, additional new replacements came aboard.

Because of their important roles, those retained from the original crew were skipper Tom Galloway and cook Rich Halper.

Our dependable LCT 1329 apparently remained in Philippine waters, and was then used in local island duties.

Whatever happened to it after March, 1946, remains a mystery.

Submitted by Don Lindstrom
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