

WAR DIARY

CONFIDENTIAL

U.S.S. L.C.I. (L) 339

JULY 16, 1943 Cont.

consisted of 15 LCI (L)'s and LST's 458 and 459, escorted by 2 YM's and 1 SC. Mission: Land troops and embark American force at Buna to return to Milne Bay. At 1135 LST's departed Task Force. Friendly planes and shipping sighted intermittently during day. Anchored off Spear Island 1930.

JULY 17, 1943

Underway 0500. Beached 1125. Unloading completed 1203. American troops began embarking 1206. Up ramps 1230; off beach 1246. Anchored 1315 off Buna. Underway 1422. Destination Milne Bay. 123 men and 5 officers aboard, 125 pounds supplies.

JULY 18, 1943

Entered Milne Bay 1350 and moored along Dutch Transport "Mearsuiker" at Wauga Wauga, Milne Bay. Disembarked troops 1727. Underway for anchorage 1854. Anchored 2141.

JULY 19 - 21, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay.

JULY 22, 1943

Underway 1015 as section leader with section of LCI (L) 337 and 338 for maneuvers and practice beaching. Beached and retracted 12 times. Anchored 1843.

JULY 23, 1943

Underway 0840, division 40 for maneuvers and practice beaching. Beached once. Anchored 1526.

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JULY 24, 1943

Underway Division 4~~ø~~ for maneuvers and practice beaching. Beached twice. Anchored 1631.

JULY 25, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay.

JULY 26, 1943

Underway 183~~ø~~, Division 4~~ø~~ for night maneuvers and beaching. Beached twice. Anchored 2215. Successful operation.

JULY 27, AUGUST 6, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay, Moored as necessary for fuel and water.

AUGUST 7, 1943

ø459 underway with Task Force , comprised of 8 LCI (L)'s; escort two destroyers. Destination: Buna, New Guinea to embark Australian Army personnel ultimately to be landed at Nassau Bay near Salamaua. Mission: Land troops 24~~øø~~, August 1~~ø~~, and return Milne Bay. Information: Smooth beach, some surf. General quarters ordered by blinker 1755. No explanation. Secured 1757. Anchored off Spear Island 19~~øø~~.

AUGUST 8, 1943

Underway ø555. Anchored Ore Bay ø93~~ø~~. Loaded 2~~øø~~ sacks mail for delivery Nassau Bay if time permitted. Anchored 1745.

AUGUST 9, 1943

Underway ø745. Beached Buna 1~~øøø~~. Off beach 112~~ø~~, 139 men, 5 officers-Australian, aboard. Anchored 1128. Underway 1236. Rendeveuzed two Destroyers, 1 PT boat at 1315. General quarters 1617. Sighted

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AUGUST 9, 1943 Cont.

Japanese Reconnaissance plane dead ahead. Altitude ~~1000~~ feet. Course 225° true. Fired upon by lead destroyer with 5"38 and 20 MM. Plane disappeared. Secured 1617. Escort augmented by 3 additional PT's at entrance Nassau Bay. Beached Nassau Bay 2255. Off beach 2341. All men, Mail and supplies successfully unloaded. Began return trip 2347.

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August 10, 1943

Underway on return trip to Milne Bay, Papua, New Guinea. Friendly shipping and aircraft sighted intermittently. Escort: Two DD's

August 11, 1943

Underway. Anchored Milne Bay 0955.

August 12, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay.

August 13, 1943

Beached to assist training Australian Army personnel.

August 14, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay.

August 15, 1943

Underway 0745 for Stringer Beach, Milne Bay. Beached 1155. Retracted 2035 with 2000 Australian Army personnel and approximately 3 tons supplies aboard. Anchored Stringer Bay 2100. Underway 2110 as part of Task Force No. 76.10.5 composed of 6 LCI's and 2 destroyers. Destination: Buna. Mission: Land troops and return Milne Bay, New Guinea. Orders changed 2124 to anchor Milne Bay until morning. Anchored 2240.

August 16, 1943

Underway 0527. Friendly planes and shipping sighted during day.

August 17, 1943

Anchored 1/2 mile off shore at Buna 0642. Underway 0647; beached 0619. Upped ramps 0706. Off beach 0711, began return trip 0715. Escort: two destroyers.

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August 18, 1943

Underway. Anchored Jock Mac Millan Bay, Milne Bay, 0618. Fueled from LST 464 later in day.

August 19, 1943

Anchored Milne Bay.

August 20, 1943

Underway 1032 as part of Task Group 76.3.1 in training operation, Order No. NG 1-43, composed of 6 DD's, 4 APD's, 19 LCI's, 5 SC's, 2 APC's, 6 LST's, 16 LCM's. Destination: Normanby Island. Mission: Training. Beached Stringer Beach, Milne Bay 1138. Upped ramps 1152 with 203 Australian Army personnel aboard. Formed group. Cruised most of night at 5 knots.

August 21, 1943

Beached 0716 Bunama Bay, Normanby Island. Off Beach 0726. Cruised about until beached at 1357 to re-embark troops. Off Beach 1410. Underway 1410 for Milne Bay. Beached 1835 Stringer beach. Disembarked troops and off Beach at 1846. Anchored 2212.

August 22, 1943

Beached to take on water PT base # 6, Milne Bay.

August 23, 1943

Returned to anchorage in Milne Bay.

August 24, September 1, 1943

Milne Bay, provisioning, division maneuvers and effecting material readiness of ship.

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U.S.S. L.C.I. (L) 339

JULY 4, 1943 Cont.

below and all sides, mean draft 3 feet. Depth water 3 feet. Stuck on coral, slight list to port. Off beach 1640 high tide with towing assistance of LCI (L) 340. Anchored off Bali Point 1700. Heavy rain squalls.

JULY 5, 1943

Underway at 0628 for Milne Bay. No escort. Sighted friendly plane 1402. Anchored Milne Bay 1845.

JULY 6 - 10, 1943

Milne Bay, New Guinea effecting repairs to bow.

JULY 11, 1943

Underway 0755. Destination: Beach near Gili Gili, New Guinea. Beached 0829 for training with Australian Army personnel.

JULY 12, 1943

Practice continued.

JULY 13, 1943

Underway 0930 for anchorage Milne Bay. Anchored 0959.

JULY 14, 1943

Anchored all day.

JULY 15, 1943

Underway 1247 for Lyal Wharf, Gili Gili, New Guinea. Beached 1529 and began loading Australian troops and supplies at 1530. Off beach 1621 with 182 Australian troops, 5 officers and 4 ten 1955 pounds of supplies. Anchored 1725 Milne Bay.

JULY 16, 1943

Underway 0400. Destination Buna, New Guinea. Task force No. NG 1-43,

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U.S.S. L.C.I.(L) 399

September 2 1943

Underway at Milne Bay at 1015 to Stringer Bay Staging Area. Reached and loaded units of the Australian 9th Division. Retracted and returned to anchorage.
Underway at 1300, destination Buna Roads, Papua, New Guinea.

September 3, 1943

Arrived at Buna at 0800. Beached and disembarked troops, remained on the beach until 1300. All ships of the convoy rendezvous at the four mile buoy off Buna Roads at 1500. The convoy consisted of 5 HM and 19 ~~LSTs~~ LCI(L). Proceeded immediately, destination RED BEACH, 12 miles east of Iae, New Guinea

September 4, 1943

At day break the convoy was approaching RED BEACH. After a ten minute bombardment of the beach by DDs, and after the initial waves of landing craft had beached and retracted LCI(L) DIV 40 plus LCI(L) 344 began their approach.

At 0705 six Japanese planes (three fighters and three bombers) approached on our port beam. When we were about 200 yards from the beach the bombing and strafing attack was made. Our guns began firing as soon as the planes were within range. No planes were shot down the some of them must have been hit many times. It is my opinion that the 20MM is not effective in warding off attack by enemy planes as its range is not great enough. At no time as long as these enemy planes were in view were they attacked or approached by our own air cover.

Our ship suffered many casualties and much damage. About 20 Australians were killed and as many more wounded.

Those of our crew injured were

| | | |
|---|----------------|------|
| DICKERSON, Charles Donald, Cox. | 552 42 65 | USNR |
| Shrapnel wounds | | |
| TRAVIGLI, John Riley, Cox. | 669 26 73 | USNR |
| Bullet wound, shrapnel wounds | | |
| CASANOVA, Thomas Tim, SI/e | 611 30 77 | USNR |
| Shrapnel wound | | |
| SMITH, Kenneth William, RM2/e | 664 51 98 | USNR |
| Shrapnel wounds, possible fractured shoulder | | |
| SHULZ, Ernest Nevin, GM3/e | 663 07 34 | USNR |
| Numerous small shrapnel wounds | | |
| MISKOVICH, George Francis, SM2/e | 652 47 02 | USNR |
| Several shrapnel wounds | | |
| FORSMAN, Richard Douglass, EM2/e | 603 24 84 | USNR |
| Shrapnel wounds | | |
| MOEN, Marlon Thoral, Ensign | File 161 653 | USNR |
| Shrapnel wounds | | |
| BEGOR, Fay B. | LT(jg) NC-V(G) | USNR |
| Large shrapnel wounds in both thighs, few small shrapnel wounds, some shock. Dr Begor later died as a result of these wounds aboard the LST 464 | | |

The ship suffered two near misses, one on starboard and one on port, plus one direct hit just to port of amidships and just forward of the bridge structure. Holds one, two, three, and crews quarters were taking on water fast. There was a large hole in the weather deck about seven feet in diameter.

The Executive Officer of the USS SONOMA (salvage tug) stated that on 7 Sept. he boarded the 399 and sounded the hole in the deck and could find no ships bottom below this hole. The bulkhead between holds three and two was demolished. There were many large and small shrapnel holes all through this part of the ship. The bridge structure was riddled with large holes. The pilot house and Doctors quarters were wrecked. The decks in this part of the ship were full of holes and were torn away from the bulkheads in many places.

The condition of the ship and crew was reported by radio and upon orders of Task Force Commander we abandoned the ship and left her on the beach. The crew and officers returned to base of operations on USS ICI(L) 398.

Dr McConkie, Medical Officer ICI(L) Group 19 was transferred from the ICI(L) 398 to the ICI(L) 398 underway. All patients were given treatment and constant medical attention was given to Dr. Bager and Smith, L.N. throughout the day. All casualties were transferred to the Army Hospital at Buna due to the fact that the LST 464 464 had failed to arrive at Buna as yet.

September 5, 1943

The remaining crew and officers were transferred by order of the Commander ICI(L) Flotilla Seven to the other ships of the Flotilla for temporary duty and transportation.

Returned to RED BEACH. The Commanding Officer of the USS ICI(L) 399, Milton L.G. BEE/e, Gustar, G.F. BEE/e, and SHIMON, Vernon BEE/e boarded the 399 to further examine the damage and recover the crews service records. (all secret and confidential communications material had been removed on abandoning ship)

The ship was subsequently assigned to the Salvage Section of TF 76 for salvage but due to enemy bombing activity no immediate attempt to salvage was made.

On September 10 1943, on orders of the Commanding Officer, U.S. Army E.S.B., who was in charge of the beach, the USS ICI(L) 399 was hauled off and anchored about 200 yards offshore and 2-3/4 miles east. It was stated by this officer that the ship marked the beach for enemy bombers and for this reason she was removed. The vessel subsequently drifted onto the coral ledge about 100 yards offshore, and over a period of a few weeks filled with water, capsized, remained for a short period with her hull awash and later slid into deeper water and sank.

October 10 1943

A salvage party under command of the Material Officer, Staff CTF 76, and including the Commanding Officer and Engineering Officer plus a portion of the crew of USS ICI(L) 399, in ICI(L) 'S 71 and 73 under the command of the Commander ICI(L) Group 20, attempted to locate the ICI(L) 399. With the aid of U.S. Army personnel attached to the beach command who had seen the 399 a determined and complete search was made for her. The spot where she sank was identified but no trace of the vessel could be found.