

The U.S.S. LST 546 was built by the Missouri Valley Bridge & Iron Company, Shipbuilding Division, Evansville, Indiana and launched in February, 1944. On Tuesday, the 21st of March, the ship was placed in reduced commission under the command of Lieut. L. A. Van Matre, commanding officer of the crew of two officers and twenty-three men comprising the ferrying crew. The ceremony took place on the main deck with Mr. Frank Harrison representing the builders and in the presence of the seven officers and seventy-one men designated to eventually man the ship. The morning of the 22nd of March, the 546 got underway for New Orleans, Louisiana. The trip down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers was interesting but uneventful and the ship arrived at the U. S. Naval Base, Algiers, Louisiana on Sunday evening, March 26th. The ferrying crew disembarked the next morning. The U.S.S. LST 546 was placed in full commission on the afternoon of March 27th with Lieut. William D. Silkworth, commanding officer; Lieut. George L. Mittelsdorf, executive officer; Ensign Robert H. Cumming, engineering officer; and Lieut. (jg) Bradley V. Borst; Ensign E. Winslor Turner; Ensign Gerald Blauwkamp and Ensign David E. McDowell division officers. There were seventy-one enlisted men in the crew. Lieut. Comdr. Wildman and party including the band represented the Algiers Naval Base. Immediately following the ceremony, two more officers and twenty-seven men reported aboard. The officers were Ensign Horace N. Compton, and Ensign David W. Curry.

The seven days spent in New Orleans were very busy. Current Bureau of Ships alterations were completed, provisions and ammunition were taken aboard, the magnetic compasses were compensated and the ship was depermed. The ship left New Orleans late on the afternoon of the 3rd of April and anchored that night at Pilotown near the mouth of the Mississippi River. The next morning it was underway for Panama City, on St. Andrews Bay, Florida, to undergo three weeks shakedown. Initial structural firing tests were conducted en route. Arriving there early on the morning of the 5th, the ship was inspected by the staff of the Officer in Charge of Shakedown, St. Andrew's Bay. At that time orders were received to the effect that the shakedown period would be foreshortened to three days and the ship would then report to LST Shakedown, Chesapeake, Bay Area, at Little Creek, Virginia, for duty. The remainder of that day and the whole of the next two were spent in beaching, mooring and gunnery exercises. On Friday evening, April 7th, the ship got underway for Little Creek, Virginia, in company with U.S.S. LST 655, the O.T.C. in LST 546. Full power trials were conducted en route and the trip was without incident save the usual heavy wind and sea encountered off the Virginia Capes. The swept channel entrance to Chesapeake Bay was sighted dead ahead at about 2300 on the night of April 13th.

The vessel was docked at Naval Amphibious Training Base at Little Creek, Virginia on the morning of April 14th and an inspection party from LST Shakedown, Chesapeake Bay Area came aboard. Miscellaneous repairs and alterations were begun and continued until the ship left the dock on Sunday afternoon, April 16th, for the Craney Island fuel docks. The ship got underway for Point Lookout, Maryland, at the mouth of the Potomac River, early Monday morning. Anchoring that evening in Cornfield Harbor, the ship was underway early the following morning to conduct beaching exercises under LST Shakedown. This was completed by noontime and the 546 was underway for Little Creek again, arriving that evening, the 18th of April. The following morning the ship was turned over to U.S.S. LST Flotilla NINE, Group TWENTY-FIVE, for operations involving the training of prospective LST crews for combat

duty. The first group of sixteen officers and one hundred and thirty-one men reported aboard the same morning. This was the beginning of nearly twelve full months of training operations, which varied but little during the course of that time. Briefly, the training cruises were of two types: one in which four groups of prospective officers comprising the officer complement of four LST were embarked, and the other in which two full prospective LST crews, including officers and men, were embarked. Each cruise was of two weeks duration and the ratio was normally four weeks operation and two weeks lay-over at Little Creek for repairs, upkeep and yard availability if necessary. An Officers cruise occurred about once every three months. The fourteen day cruise was divided into two periods, namely six days at the dock or at anchor off Little Creek for the training personnel to familiarize themselves with the ship, and eight days of operations on Chesapeake Bay when the training personnel actually operated the ship and manned all stations. During this period the ship carried out all types of operations including beachings, mooring, fueling, towing, anchoring, firing and formation steaming with tactics. All manner of drills were conducted and casualties simulated. The last two days of the Officers cruise were taken up by a trip to sea off Cape Henry for celestial navigation training.

The first training cruise was only six days duration, ending on Tuesday, 25th April. On the 27th another group came aboard and completed the first full training cruise on May 10th. The following day two complete crews reported aboard for training and were disembarked on 23rd May. An availability period followed this during which miscellaneous, upkeep and repairs were performed. On June 8th twenty-three officers reported aboard for training and disembarked on June 21st. The next day two complete crews reported aboard for training and disembarked on July 5th. On the 6th two more crews reported aboard and disembarked on the 19th. No training crews were assigned for the next two week period and a lay-over at Little Creek was scheduled.

It was during the lay-over periods that the 546 was sometimes assigned independent temporary duty with the Research and Development Section of the Amphibious Training Command Atlantic Fleet. Such was the case at this time, and on July 23rd work was started on an installation for preventing the bow ramp from bouncing up and down when it was lowered in a sea. The ramp was filled with water to increase the weight and removable strongbacks were rigged. On July 25th, the 546 got underway for the open sea off Virginia Beach to conduct tests with representatives from the Bureau of Ships as well as ComPhibsTraLant aboard. There were only slight swells running but sufficient to prove the inadequacy of the installation. On the afternoon of July 26th, experiments were conducted at the beaching area adjacent to and east of the Little Creek entrance channel. They were tests of the holding power of the stern anchor brake and representatives of the manufacturer were aboard to observe and advise. Beachings were made at one-third, standard, and flank speeds and it was proven that, for all practical purposes, the brake on the stern anchor would not stop the ship when underway at greater than one-third speed.

The ship went into the Norfolk Navy Yard at Portsmouth, Virginia on July 27th for repairs, alterations and dry docking. The Research and Development Section of ComPhibsTraLant took charge of installing another type of ramp hold-down gear and a catapult and runway on the main deck for launching Piper Cub type aircraft. Work was completed on the 3rd of August and the ship left the yard and anchored off Little Creek, Virginia. The next morning the ramp gear was tested by running and LVT from the water into the tank deck and off

again. The morning of the 5th further tests were made by beaching on the Bradford beach east of Little Creek entrance, and running tanks, jeeps and half-tracks on and off the ship. The morning of August 7th the ship docked at the Naval Operation Base and an airplane was placed on the runway for a test launching. The next day it was launched under the supervision of the Research and Development Section with a Lt. Comdr. Paddock flying the plane. A jet propelled launching device was used. It failed once because the plane got off the runway but the second attempt was highly successful. It is believed that this was the first time a plane was catapulted from an LST, although scouting planes had flown from LST with specially built take-off strips. The plane was placed aboard again the next day and on Thursday, August 10th it was launched again with official observers aboard from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and British Royal Engineers. Rear Admiral Rockwell, the commander of Amphibious Training Command Atlantic Fleet and Rear Admiral DeLany of the Bureau of Ships were the chief observers. The test was pronounced highly successful and the ship returned to the Norfolk Navy Yard for the removal of the equipment tested.

The 546 returned to the training program on Wednesday, August 16th when the commander of LST Group Twenty-Five shifted his flag to this vessel. Training crews reported aboard on the 17th and the usual two week program was commenced. Simulated air attacks by U.S. Navy planes while en route in formation and a mock invasion of Point Lookout with formation beaching were additions to the normal schedule..

Ensign Carl Vergamini reported aboard to relieve Lieut. Bradley V. Borst. The trainees disembarked on Wednesday, 30 August and ComLSTGroup Twenty-Five shifted his flag back aboard the LST 683. Two more training crews reported aboard on the 31st and disembarked on September 13th. On that same date, hurricane warnings were received and all ships cleared Little Creek harbor and anchorage, making a night run to Point Lookout, Maryland. This vessel rode out the storm on eighty fathoms of anchor chain and returned to Little Creek the following night. The normal routine of the training program continued until this vessel was assigned to relieve the LST 1005 at Cornfield Harbor, Maryland on October 8th in order that the Officer in Charge of LST Shakedown, Chesapeake Bay Area might shift his staff from that ship to the 546. During the six week period that this staff was aboard, the ship remained anchored in Cornfield Harbor and was relieved by the LT 1009 on November 19th. On October 22nd, Ensign Lawrence A. Day reported aboard to relieve Ensign E. Winslow Turner. Upon returning to the training program, this ship received an Annual Military Inspection by ComLSTGroup Twenty-Five assisted by LST 987 on December 3rd. On December 10th, the ship went into Norfolk Navy Yard for an availability period and left on the 14th, returning to the training program on the 21st with a cruise to Baltimore, Maryland for liberty and recreation over Christmas. The officers and men assisted ComLSTGroup Twenty-Five in the Annual Military Inspection of LST 547 on the 15th of January 1945. On the 18th an officers training cruise was begun with a trip to Baltimore, Md. And ended on the 13th after a 24 hour cruise off the Virginia Capes for celestial navigation practice. Following a one day availability in the Norfolk Navy Yard for repair of boat davits, the normal training routine was resumed. During the next lay-over period, the ship was assigned training duty at the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Virginia Friday and Saturday, February 23rd and 24th, were spent training Marine Officer candidates in amphibious invasion tactics, the LST acting as a transport and the men disembarking into small boats. The ship returned to the training program on March 1st and bow-on moorings at Naval Ammunition Dept,

Yorktown, Virginia were introduced into the normal schedule. The ship was depermed at Norfolk between cruises on March 12th and on the 16th practiced beaching with pontoons alongside on Bradford Beach, east of Little Creek entrance. On March 14th Lt. (jg) Andrew W. Starratt and Lt. (jg) Eugne A. Guarino reported aboard for duty. The last training crews disembarked on March 28th and the Ship commended preparations for overseas duty, its task organization having been redesignated as LST Flotilla Thirty-Seven, Group One-Hundred-Eleven.

The LST 546 was assigned a final, 15 day Navy Yard availability commencing on the 3rd of April. The ship fueled, provisioned, loaded with ammunition and LCT 448 placed on the main deck. Full power runs were made, the magnetic compasses were corrected and, on April 16th the ship was placed in a north bound convoy for loading in New York harbor. A cargo of ammunition was placed on the tank deck at the N.A.D. docks at Leonardo, New Jersey and the ship sailed for Pearl Harbor in convoy on May 6th, 1945. While en route from New York to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Germany surrendered but anti-submarine measures were continued. Sunday, May 13th the ship anchored at Guantanamo Bay and got underway again for Panama the next day and headed for Pearl Harbor alone. Upon arrival in the Pearl Harbor area on June 8th the ship was assigned anchorage in Kaneohe Bay on the north side of Oahu. The voyage was without incident and with good weather all the way.

The ship was now officially a part of the Pacific Fleet and received orders from the Commander Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet to proceed to Saipan, Marianas Islands via Eniwetok, Marshall Islands for unloading. It left Kaneohe Bay with three other LST on June 12th and arrived at Eniwetok on the 23rd. Remaining only about 24 hours, it sailed for Saipan with two of the three other LST, arriving there on June 28th. The next day a partial unloading started and was completed on July 3rd, the remainder of the loan being destined for Guam. On July 17th, orders were received to proceed to Guam and the ship arrived there on the 18th. It remained there until the 28th during which time the rest of the cargo was unloaded, pontoons causeway were hung on both sides of the ship, and the ship reloaded with empty gasoline drums and Napalm for Tinian Island. Arriving there on the 29th, the ship was unloaded and departed for Saipan on the 31st where it arrived the same day. The ship was loaded with lube oil, mail and army troops for Okinawa and sailed in convoy on August 11th arriving at Hagushi on the 17th. On the 18th the first enlisted men with points for discharge were transferred and the ship was beached for unloading. This was completed on the 11nd and on September 3rd it got underway for Buckner Bay to load. Completed loading army vehicles of all types on the 7th and got underway for Hagushi to join convoy for Jinsen, Korea on September 12th and was the first LST to anchor in the harbor, the port having been occupied on the 9th. The pontoons were launched the next morning and unloading commenced that night after high tide made it possible for the ship to enter the tidal basin. The ship left the basin on the 14th and launched the LCT 448 from the main deck.

The ship lay at anchor here for about 10 days and then sailed for Okinawa in convoy arriving on the 27th at Hagushi where it was immediately ordered to Ie Shima. Here troops, equipment and vehicles of the 427th Engineer Construction Battalion were loaded for Korea. On the 29th, the ship was ordered out of Hagushi harbor in convoy to execute a typhoon plan. No bad weather was encountered, the convoy returned and the 546 loaded troops, equipment and

vehicles of the 183rd Ordnance Depot Co. and the 1395th Engineer Construction Battalion. The Executive Officer Liet. G. G. Mittelsdorf was transferred for discharge and Lieut. (jg) R. H. Cumming was appointed to take over his duties on October 6th. On October 8th another typhoon plan was put into execution and on the night of Tuesday October 9th extremely bad weather was encountered with wind velocities to eighty miles per hour and very heavy seas. It is estimated that the storm center passed about seventy miles from the convoy. Fortunately no damage resulted to the 546. After returning to Hagushi for one day, the ship sailed for Jinsen, Korea on October 13th and arrived on the 18th. Unloading began immediately and the ship was reloaded as soon as empty with army troops, equipment and vehicles for Saishu To Island. It left Jinsen on the 20th in company with LST 613 and these were the first LST to Saishu To, arriving on the 22nd. The army was unloaded and 1,099 Japanese troops were loaded for Sasebo, Kyushu on the 23rd. Many were hospital cases and 14 died before being unloaded at Sadebo on the 26th of October. Behavior was excellent and no trouble was experienced with the Japanese. On November 2nd, the ship sailed in company with three other LST for Okinawa and arrived on the 4th. Reloading commenced on the 7th at Purple Beach, Hagushi and a cargo of army troops, equipment and vehicles of the 1475th Engineer Maintenance Company were taken aboard for Fusan, Korea. The ship sailed in convoy of three LST on the 9th and arrived on the 12th. This was the last occupation operation that the ship participated in.

There was no loading at Fusan and the ship sailed for Taku, China on November 17th with no cargo. Arriving there on the 21st the ship was assigned to Task Force 78 for repatriation duty. This involved transporting about 1,000 Japanese troops from Taku to Sasebo, Kyushu and backloading the same number of either Chinese or Korean civilians. The Japanese troops were orderly, reasonably clean and well disciplined, but the civilians, either Korean or Chinese, were dirty, disorganized and generally quite miserable. The rough, cold weather encountered added immeasurably to their discomfort. This ship made three such trips, leaving Taku on November 30th for the first one and arriving at Sadebo December 4th. Chinese labor troops were backloaded on the 7th, arriving at Taku on the 11th. The next trip began on December 15th with arrival at Sadebo on the 19th. Korean civilians were loaded for Kunsan, Korea on the 23rd, arriving there on the 26th and departing on the 29th. On the 6th of January Lt. (jg) C. Vergamini and Lt. (jg) G. Blauwkamp were transferred for discharge. The ship left Taku for the last time on January 6th, 1946 and delivered the Japanese at Sasebo on the 10th. These trips were all made in company with three other LST, the 546 acting as O.T.C. at all times. On the last trip a small Chinese boat was found drifting in the North China sea with its sail and scull gone and the occupants starving. It was towed to a larger junk about ten miles away. At Sasebo the 546 and five other LST had orders detaching them from the Seventh Fleet ordering them to report to C.T.F. 54 at Yokohama, Honshu for stripping and decommissioning. These orders were received with a great deal of enthusiasm by all hands on these ships, and those remaining on the repatriation program were very envious. Playing host to 1,000 filthy, diseased, disorganized and practically helpless people with no common language and no interpreter was much more than any American sailor deserves. The organized Japanese with their interpreters were very little trouble except when the rough weather made most of them seasick, which was about three-fourths of the time. The accumulated stench from the mass of people and the sickness overpowered you. All in all, it was miserable, demoralizing duty, especially for those vessels with twelve to sixteen months combat duty to their credit.

Lieut. (jg) D.E. McDowell was transferred for discharge on the 11th and in compliance with orders, the 546 left Sasebo on January 14th in company with five other LST and arrived in Yokohama on the 18th. Lieut. (jg). L.A. Day was transferred to the LST 1141 on February 5th. Here stripping was commenced almost immediately and at this date, February 22nd, 1946, the ship is ready for decommissioning. The Commanding Officer, Lieut. Comdr. W. D. Silkworth, USNR, and the Engineering Officer, Lieut. (jg) R. H. Cumming, USN, and twelve enlisted men are still aboard from the original crew that put the ship in commission. Decommissioning should take place in the next few days, when the ship will be turned over to SCAJAP and manned by Japanese crews. At that time, Lieut. Comdr. Silkworth will be transferred for discharge as will most of these twelve men and Lieut. (jg) R. H. Cumming will go to the U.S.S. Plavic APD 70 as Engineering Officer. That will complete the career of the U.S.S. LST 546 as a commissioned vessel of the United States Navy. As evidenced by the foregoing, the ship saw no combat action, but, during its nearly two years of service has had a great number and a great variety of duties all of which contributed a share toward winning the war and the peace. On 12 November, 1945, the Officers and men of the LST 546 were commended by Commander LST Flotilla Thirty-Seven for excellent performance of and devotion to duty while engaged in training of prospective LST crews for combat duty. This ship has neither an heroic nor an outstanding history but it does have a worthwhile one.