20th Combat Engineer Association

of World War II

The Wavy Arrow

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November 2008

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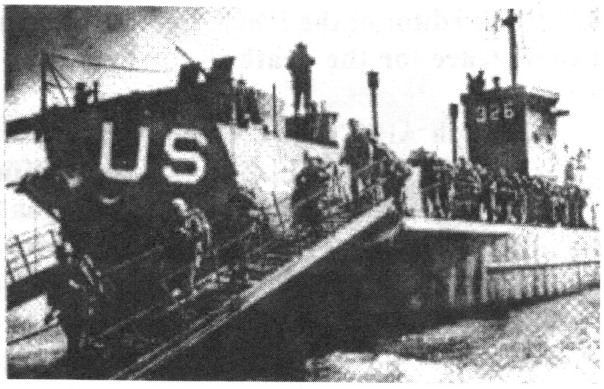
You have read about the landing craft that the 20th Engineers used in Sicily and Normandy. Let us now tell you more about their acronyms: *LCI, LST*, and *LCVP*.

Landing Craft Infantry (LCI)

In 1942 the British decided that a larger landing craft was needed than their *Landing Craft Attack* (LCA). This new landing craft called *LCI (Landing Craft Infantry)* carried up to 200 troops, with a crew of three officers and 21 enlisted men. The first *LCI* entered service in 1943 with a hull 158 feet long and two gangways, one of either side, that were lowered down into the water or if close enough on the beach so that the troops could disembark. Some 923 *LCIs* were built in ten American ship yards.

The 20th Engineer Combat Regiment used *LCIs* for the July 10, 1943, invasion of Sicily. Clarence O. Magee wrote: "We boarded *LCIs* in Bizerte on July 5th, and crossed from Tunisia, North Africa, to Sicily. The *LCI* on which Colonel Daley was approaching the beach hit a sand bar and the water was six feet deep. Daley led the troops down the ramps of the *LCI* into six feet of water and he arrived very wet on the beach. 20th Engineer Chaplain Alton Carpenter explains that when he stepped off the ramp he felt himself being pulled under the water and he had to swim ashore. When your editor stepped off his *LCI* ramp, he was luckily in three feet of water. However, as he was wadding ashore, he stepped into a large underwater bomb crater and was completely submerged.

The steepness and narrowness of the ramps made the *LCI* impractical for landing troops as part of an initial assault against a defended beach and were used for follow-up waves. Therefore *LCI's* were often used differently during the June 6th invasion of Normandy. Company B of the 20th was scheduled to beach on *LCI 83*, but by the time the craft got near the beach, the enemy firing had made the beach too hot. Therefore, the *LCI* moved off and waited for the skipper to find an opportunity to beach. However, *LCI 83* took a direct hit in the forward steel bullpen which killed three men. So instead of beaching the *LCI*, Company B loaded on *LCVPs* and headed for shore. An explanation of the *LCVP* appears in this article which continues on page three. See the photograph on the right of an *LCI* showing troops disembarking down the ramp.



Letters Received

Sam Bonino (Nephew of Charles Bonino, C/1340th) writes: "About five years ago Sidney Cousins (C/1340th) gave me a telephone call in response to my *Wavy Arrow* request for any information about my deceased uncle, Charles Bonino. Since then we have communicated by telephone and mail. Sidney and Uncle Charlie were in the same squad and were wounded on the same day in the Huertgen Forest. Uncle Charlie shared many stories with me and I learned more from his diary. My favorite was of the two of them 'selling' cigarettes in Czechoslovakia. I was able to visit New Orleans this past May where I met with Sidney at the National World War II Museum. We wore red shirts so that we could recognize each other. Sidney also showed me other attraction in the Crescent City. I am enclosing a 1945 photograph of Sidney and Uncle Charlie. Thank you for continuing to publish the *Wavy Arrow*. I would never have been able to learn more about my uncle if it had not been for it."

Irene Homa (For John Homa, H&S/1340th) writes: "John is now 95 years old and is in very poor health. I am just thankful that his health is not worse. I am thankful that I can still drive and take care of everything even though I am 89 years old. We look forward to receive each issue of the *Wavy Arrow*.

Liz Magee (Widow of Clarence O. McGee, Officer) writes: "Thank you so much for the *Wavy Arrow*. The August issue with C.O.s photograph was especially appreciated. He would have loved to see it. He talked often about the 42nd Reunion held August 16-18, 1996, in Alexandria, Louisiana. It was a very important event in his life. Thanks for the pleasure in giving him this opportunity to host the 1996 Reunion. He had a very long and trying time for the last five years of his life. May the *Wavy Arrow* continue. Enclosed is a memorial to a great guy."

Audrey P. Riddick (Widow of James Riddick, Jr., C/20th) writes: "Thank you for continuing to send me the *Wavy Arrow*. I am sending you a contribution in memory of my husband James Riddick, Jr., who died in 2002."

Peter M. Tarsi (B/20th) writes: "I really enjoy the *Wavy Arrow*. Even though we went through hell for four years, I watch everything pertaining to World War II on television. So it is great to read about the 20th Engineers in your newsletter. Please accept the enclosed contribution to keep the *Wavy Arrow* coming to us veterans."

The editor of the *Wavy Arrow* expresses his deep appreciation for the cards and letters of condolence for the death of his beloved wife, Joan.

Joseph Alter (2nd Lt., B/1340th). His wife died in 1999.
Mick (Son of 20th Commanding Officer) and Pat Daley.
John (H&S/1340th) and Irene Homa
Nan Morrow (Widow of Rupert Morrow, A/20) Died 1973.
Harry (668 Topo/1171st Group) and Betty Moulder
Peter (B/20th) and Josie Tarsi
Agnes Thomas (Widow of Roy Thomas, B/1340th). Died 2003

Landing Ship Tank (LST)

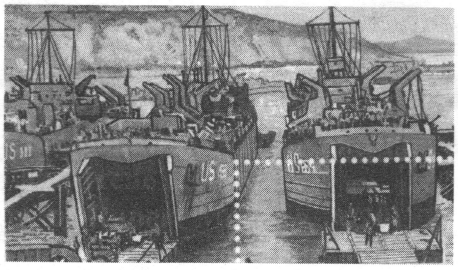
The British evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940 demonstrated that the Allied needed relatively large, ocean-going ships capable to shore-to-shore delivery of tanks and other vehicles in amphibious assaults. As an interim measure, three *GRT* tankers, built to pass over the restrictive bars of Lake Naracaibo, Venezuela, were selected to which bow doors and ramps were added becoming the first tank landing ships. They later proved their worth during the invasion of Algeria in 1942, but their bluff bows pointed up the need for an all-new design incorporating a sleeker hull.

John C. Niedermail of the U.S. Bureau of Ships sketched out an awkward looking ship in November 1941 that proved to be the basic design for the *Landing Ship Tank (LST)*. Described as a self-propelled garage, each ship was 328 feet long, 50 feet wide, with a 14 foot wide bow door and ramp to load and unload Allied tanks and vehicles. Each ship could carry as many as 25 tanks with ammunition and fuel. The ship was propelled by two diesel engines produced by General Motors, and required 8-10 officers and 115 enlisted men. The keel of the first *LST* was laid on June 10, 1942, at Newport News. Twenty-three were commissioned by the end of 1942, and more than 1,000 *LSTs* were built during World War II. A large number of the 20th and 1340th employed *LSTs* during the Normandy invasion.

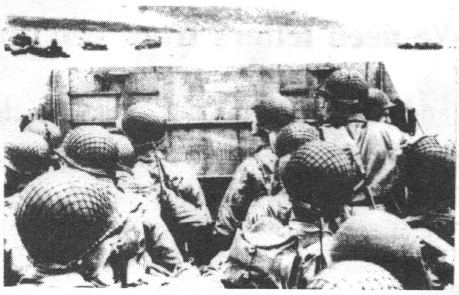
Truman H. Setliffe reported that June 2-4, 1944, part of the Battalion's personnel and heavy equipment loaded on *LST 505* in Falmouth Harbor, England. On the evening of June 5, 1944, the *LST* sailed into the English Channel as part of a convoy headed for an early landing on Omaha Beach." The troops disembarked in small boats, but *LST 505* did not beach for several days to unload the vehicles and bull dozers of the 20th Engineers.

Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP)

Beaching troops before the larger *LCIs* and *LSTs* could move close enough to the shore was the biggest challenge of all. During the 1930s Andrew Jackson Higgins had perfected a boat dubbed the *Eureka* to work in the swamps of south Louisiana. The Japanese had been using a ramp-bowed landing craft in the 1937 Sino-Japanese War. U.S. Navy and Marine Corps observers showed Higgins a picture of one of these crafts. Within one month Higgins developed a *Eureka* with a full-width ramp which was tested on Lake Ponchetrain that became the model for the *Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel* (LCVP) which became more popularly known as the *Higgins Boat.*



LSTs Loading In England To Take Troops And Equipment To Normandy



A View From Inside An LCVP Heading Toward Omaha Beach

Landing Craft continued from page three

The 36 foot-long *Higgins Boat* was made of oak, pine, or mahogany with metal ramp that opened at the front. It could accommodate a platoon of 36 men with their equipment, or a jeep with twelve men. More than 20,000 *Higgins Boats* were manufactured by Higgins Industries and others licensed to use the design. *LCVPs* landed more Allied troops during World War II than all other types of landing crafts combined.

Virtually every member of the 20th and 1340th landed on Omaha Beach utilizing an *LCVP*. One of the most difficult tasks was climbing down a rope ladder in heavy waves to get into a *Higgins Boat*. Another problem was that a number of the *Higgins Boats* beached as much as one mile from the point where it was supposed to land. Chaplain Carpenter described his landing, "Working my way in between swamped vehicles, I waded ashore through the chest-high surf. I found myself having to push aside the body of one G.I. who appeared to have drowned from the weight of his pack."

General Dwight Eisenhower described Andrew Higgins as "the man who won the war for us. If Higgins had not designed and built those *LCVPs*, we never could have landed over an open beach, The whole strategy of the war would have been different."

Wavy Arrow Contributions

We thank the following for having made a contribution to keep the *Wavy Arrow* coming to you on a regular basis. Please consider one if you haven't made a contribution recently.

Sam Bonino (Nephew of Charles Bonino, C/1340th)	$25.00
Edmund "Mick" Daley (Son of 20th Commanding Officer)	$50.00
Irene Homa (For John Homa, H&S, 1340th)	$50.00
Rita Izzo (Daughter of James Salerno, A/1340th)	$25.00
Liz Magee (Widow of Clarence O. McGee, Officer)	$50.00
Harry E. Moulder (668 Topo/1171st Group)	$25.00
Steve Poulos (B/20th)	$10.00
Audrey P. Riddick (Widow of James Riddick, Jr.	$25.00
Peter M. Tarsi (B/20th)	$30.00

We need letters from veterans and others for the next issue.

Send Contributions, Letters, Articles, Photographs, Obituaries, and other News Items for inclusion in future issues of the *Wavy Arrow* to editor George Griffenhagen, 2501 Drexel Street, Vienna, VA 22180.

Happy Holidays!