



the QUARTERDECK LOG

Membership publication of the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association. Publishes quarterly—Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. Not sold on a subscription basis. The Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association is a Non-Profit Association of Active Duty, Retired, Reserve and Honorably Discharged Former Members of the United States Coast Guard who served in, or provided direct support to, combat situations recognized by an appropriate military award while serving as a member of the United States Coast Guard.

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3rd Quarter 2023

THE U.S. COAST GUARD AT IWO JIMA



In This Issue:

From The President	Page	2
From the Vice President	Page	3
From the Secretary/Treasurer	Page	4
New Members, Booster Club, and	Page	4
Crossing the Bar	Page	5
Tribute to PNP Stephen H. Petersen	Page	5-6
Auxiliary News	Page	7
Cover Story	Pages	9-17
Featured Articles	Pages	18-25
News and Notices	Page	26
Trivia	Page	27
Veterans Administration Benefits	Pages	28-29
Ships Store	Page	30
CGCVA Membership Form	Inside back-cover	

Above left, Coast Guardsmen assist a downed Marine aviator.

Top right, taking Marines into the beach.

Bottom right, Coast Guard and Navy LSTs offloading war material and troops.

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

COAST GUARD COMBAT VETERANS ASSOCIATION

ELECTED OFFICERS

National President—Joseph Prince, LM

National Vice President—Bruce Bruni, LM

National Secretary/Treasurer—Gary Sherman, LM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman—PNP Terry O'Connell, LM

1st Term—Michael Johnson, LM, Larry Jones, LM

2nd Term—Mark Pearson, LM, Timothy Mowbray (to finish out
Joe Prince's remaining two years)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE*

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*Use the Administrative Office for contact with the
CGCVA on all matters

THE QUARTERDECK LOG

Editor/Publisher — Bruce Bruni, LM, bfb203@gmail.com

AUXILIARY OFFICERS

National President—Barbara Weeks

National Vice President—Linda Kay

National Secretary / Treasurer—Javaughn Miller

APPOINTED OFFICERS

ByLaws—Gary Sherman, LM

Reunion Planners—PNP Michael Placencia, LM
Michael Johnson, LM, Bruce Bruni, LM, Ed Semler,

Membership—PNP Michael Placencia, LM

Ship's Store Manager—Russell Allyson

Historian—PNP/Founder Paul C. Scotti, LM

Service Officers—Thomas Huckelberry, LM

Richard Hogan Jr., LM, and Larry Jones, LM

MAA—Russ Weeks

Chaplain—Vince Patton, LM

Parliamentarian—PNP Michael Placencia, LM

Nominating Committee—Bill Femia, LM

Cape May Liaison—Thomas Dougherty, LM

COAST GUARD HISTORY CONTRIBUTOR

Dr. William Theisen, Ph.D., CG Historian

It is with sad news about the passing of former CGCVA President and Life Member Steve Petersen that I start my column. Steve was a Vietnam Veteran and recipient of the Bronze Star. He had been a member of the CGCVA since September 15, 1987, served as National President from 2017-2021, and was National Vice President during the 2015 Buffalo reunion that brought more of my generation of Veterans into the CGCVA. Steve pursued recognition of the Coast Guard's role in the Global War on Terror and the Coast Guard veterans who deployed in supporting those contingency operations. We must continue in that direction, along with remembering past wars, to honor Steve's service to the CGCVA and the United States Coast Guard. Please keep his wife Kay and their family in your thoughts and prayers.



The reunion committee is researching a suitable venue for the 2025 reunion, which will be on the east coast. They are conducting site visits within the next few months before making the final location determination. Cost to our members is a big consideration for the reunion. The decision was made to schedule the 2025 reunion activities over a three-day period instead of four, making it more feasible for those with work commitments to attend. Those wishing to extend their stay for a time of leisure and vacation could certainly do so when making their reservation. We will have a final decision on the location and hotel venue by the 4th quarter and will publish the results in the Quarterdeck Log.

Grand Haven's Coast Guard Day 2023 has come and gone without official CGCVA representation. VP Bruce Bruni and I intend to be present at next year's event but we would like other members to also attend as representatives of the CGCVA. The more the merrier. If you are interested in attending with us, pencil it in for next year 2024! More information will follow in future Quarterdeck Logs.

Semper Paratus,

Joe

FROM THE NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT

Like many of you, I was saddened by the news of Steve Petersen's passing. Steve was a leader for the CGCVA, and in 2015, persuaded me to take a more active role in the Association. Steve was dedicated and committed to improving the status of the CGCVA within the leadership of the Coast Guard community. When he had the energy, he and Terry O'Connell often traveled around the country, at their own expense to represent the CGCVA at cutter commissioning ceremonies, Coast Guard celebrations at Grand Haven, and other Coast Guard activities. He was the consummate cheerleader for the CGCVA and for informing the general public of the Coast Guard's participation in the many wartime conflicts since 1790.



We knew that Steve's health had been weakening over the past 12 months, and he was unable to attend this year's reunion in Reno. Travel had become very difficult for him, but he fought his illness like the fighter he was. He will be missed. Fair winds and following seas, my friend. Until Valhalla.

Steve's remains will be buried later this year at Arlington National Cemetery.



Now for some organizational business. The cost of printing and mailing the Quarterdeck Log continues to increase. Therefore, it is critical that you keep Gary Sherman informed of your change in address, whether heading to your winter/summer residence or permanently moving to another location. We cannot afford to have the magazine returned to us. Please help us keep our operational costs to a minimum, while we provide a quality magazine which you can share with others in your community.

We also provide a copy of the Quarterdeck Log to Honorary Members in recognition of their interest and support of the CGCVA. To ensure that the magazine is delivered efficiently, the National Secretary/Treasurer, Gary Sherman, is verifying the mailing addresses and current information of all Honorary Members. Therefore, we are asking all Honorary Members to please contact Gary Sherman at cgcva@comcast.net, not later than November 1, 2023, to verify their current mailing address if they wish to continue receiving the Quarterdeck Log. If they do not respond by that date, we will assume that they no longer wish to receive a copy and will remove them from the mailing list.

We thank the Honorary Members for their continued support. If you have any concerns regarding this decision, you can contact Joe Prince at saltyd3@yahoo.com or me at bfb203@gmail.com.

As mentioned by the National President, the Reunion Committee reviewed the recommendations submitted by those in attendance at the 2023 Reunion for where the 2025 reunion should be held. We took each recommendation seriously, discussed the potential for each, then focused on five suggested locations. We considered price, accommodations, ease and cost of travel to the site, and area attractions to make your stay a vacation. By the time you receive this copy of the magazine, the first site survey will have been completed. If we determine that the site is acceptable in meeting the desires and needs of the CGCVA, we will commence negotiations for a contract. Hopefully, the process will be completed in time for announcement in the 4th quarter QDL.

~ Bruce

FROM THE NATIONAL SECRETARY / TREASURER

CGCVA REPRESENTATIVE WANTED

The CGCVA has four events each year that are held at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy where the CGCVA challenge coins are presented to deserving cadets or officer candidates. We've been making such presentations since 1997 and we intend to continue this program which serves to further promote our Association's purpose to "inform the public" of the U. S. Coast Guard's participation in this nation's conflicts "since 1790."



Three times a year, the CGCVA gives a challenge coin at the U.S. Coast Guard Officer Candidate School's Direct Commission Officer (DCO) Program, honoring CDR Lonnie Mixon, a Silver Star recipient who flew HH-3Es, Jolly Greens, in Vietnam. This graduation ceremony takes place every four months.

Each Fall, at the Academy's late September's Parent's Weekend, we give a challenge coin honoring former CGCVA member and Navy Cross recipient, Capt. Quentin Walsh, a Coast Guard WWII hero! The coin is given to a male and female cadet with the best obstacle course score during their Swab Summer. The CGCVA has been making this presentation since 1997.

The CGCVA is having difficulty in finding someone willing to attend these events, the three graduations of the Direct Commission Program and the annual Parent's Weekend in September. You don't have to be a Coast Guard Academy alumnus or an OCS graduate to represent the CGCVA. We need a "detail" of members willing to serve as envoys in representing the Association on a rotating basis at these events that are held at the Coast Guard Academy located in New London, CT.

A note of appreciation to Walt Viglienze who has been working the phones to find an Academy classmate(s) who might be willing to represent the organization, but so far has not been successful. We may have to consider using non-CGCVA members to make the presentations.

I realize that travel to the Academy can be costly for some. The National President, Joe Prince, has authorized me to help cover some of the member's out of pocket travel expenses to attend and make these presentations.

If you have an interest in supporting this effort, please contact me at 410-690-8000 or through my email cgcva@comcast.net. This is your chance to support the Association. Please consider stepping up! We need your help. ~ Thank you.

SHIP'S STORE NEWS:

It's a beautiful shirt! The new CGCVA logo Polo shirts sold out quickly at the Reno reunion. We had many requests from members who saw the superior quality of these non-shrinking, no-wrinkle, moisture wicking Polo shirts, but they were gone before they had a chance to purchase one. However, our Ship's Store has been re-stocked with all kinds of sizes and are ready to ship. From Medium to 2XL, they are a shirt that will last for many years. See the Ship's Store on page 30 for a description of the shirt. This is the best quality shirt we have had yet. Please buy up our current inventory AND WE'LL BUY MORE!

Thank you!

Gary Sherman,
National Secretary/Treasurer

BOOSTER CLUB

THE QDL BOOSTER CLUB

The QDL Booster Club provides a tax-exempt opportunity to donate funds to offset the cost of printing and mailing the Quarterdeck Log. Donations should be sent to the Administrative Office with the memo section of the check marked "QDL Booster Club." Contributor's names will be published with dollar amounts remaining confidential. We greatly appreciate the following members who have made contributions to the Booster Club since the last edition of the QDL was published.

CURRENT QDL BOOSTER DONATIONS

Christopher Wood, Ronald Gillette, Daniel F. Bothe, Chris McCoy

IN MEMORY OF DONATIONS

Gary Sherman, IMO Stephen Petersen, MKCM
Charles Bevel, IMO Joyce Bevel

CROSSED THE BAR

It is with sadness that we take note of the following members who have crossed the bar.

PNP Stephen H. Petersen, RVN; J.O.K. Walsh, RVN; Iver Anderson, WWII, ROK;
Richard E. Landick, WWII; Edward J. Foster, RVN; Armand L. Chapeau, RVN;
John M. Roadcap, RVN; John B. Gaida, DST

NEW MEMBERS

NEW MEMBER	SHIP/UNIT IN COMBAT ZONE	CONFLICT	SPONSOR
William Kansier	USS Aquarius	WWII	Jim Fay
Erica A. Helgen	CGC Monomoy	GWOT	PATFORSWA
Donald G. Smith, Jr.	PSU-301	DST	
Scotty Robinson	LORAN Sta Tan My	RVN	

THE PASSING OF PNP STEVE PETERSEN

Past National President Stephen Petersen crossed the bar on 25 July 2023 at 81 years of age. Steve was a Life Member of the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association since 15 September 1987 and faithfully served the organization in several capacities, including two terms as National President, two terms as National Vice President, four terms as the

Reunion Committee co-chair, and a term as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. He represented the Association as an invitee at three Coast Guard Festivals held in Grand Haven, MI. He was a featured presenter at several USCG Sentinel Class Cutter Commissioning events and at the dedication ceremony of the Enlisted Memorial at Cape May, NJ. Steve's leadership was key in bringing the Association into the daily conversation at many of

CROSSING THE BAR

these events that earned him the Don Kneip Award in 2023. We owe Steve a great debt of gratitude.

Steve was a quiet, unassuming man, who rarely dwelled on sea stories of his experiences. He enlisted into the Coast Guard in 1960, was a qualified diver, served aboard five cutters and several shore assignments, rising to the rank of MKCM before retiring after 22 years of service. Steve deployed to Vietnam as a Team Leader with an Explosive Loading Detachment in Danang and later assumed duties as the Officer-in-Charge of the detachment. He was the last member of the detachment to depart

Vietnam before the country fell to the North Vietnamese. Steve was awarded the Bronze Star for his meritorious service during his deployment.

He is survived by his wife Kay; his children, Will (Michelle) and Demi; his granddaughters, Kaylen and Brooke; his sisters, Karen, Candy (Dave) and Anice; his nieces, Laura (Ken), Sherry (Mike), and Lauren (Jeff); and his great-nephews, Sam, Ben and Maxwell. Steve will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery at a future date in a private ceremony.

Rest in peace, brother. We have the watch.



Steve receiving the Bronze Star.



Steve skydiving and selling the Coast Guard.



2013—Steve, center right, being sworn in as Vice President, along with Mike Placencia, President and Gary Sherman, Treasurer.



2014—On the reviewing stand at TRACEN, Cape May, NJ., with PNP Joe Kleinpeter and Gary Sherman



2014— As National Vice President, Steve is pictured with the CGCVA's Person of the Year, GM3 Samuel A. Peikert and his wife, Jackie.



2017—Presenting Gil "Frenchy" Benoit with the Don Kneip award, with Frenchy's wife, Linda, looking on.



2019 -Steve presenting the CGCVA plaque to the CO and XO of USCGC Daniel Tarr at the ship's commissioning in Galveston, TX.



2017—Steve and Swede Johnson inspecting CGC Munro's engineering spaces.



2019—The dedication of the Enlisted Memorial at TRACEN, Cape May, NJ. L-R are Commandant Karl Schultz, National President Steve Petersen, Memorial Foundation President, Tom Dougherty, and Vice Commandant, Charles Ray.

AUXILIARY NEWS



AUXILIARY NEWS

*National Auxiliary
President*

I hope everyone is having an enjoyable summer spending time with family and friends!

Our summer has been full of Grandkid's sporting events as well as our annual summer boat trips.

Russ and I had the opportunity to represent the CGCVA at the 2023 annual Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven, MI. There were many tributes in honor of the late Commander Mike Smith, USCG (ret), who coordinated the festival for the past 17 years. Mike was a friend of the CGCVA and had attended the 2019 CGCVA Reunion in Charleston, SC. Unfortunately, Commander Smith crossed the bar on April 27, 2023.

Although 2025 seems to be a long way off, it certainly isn't too early for the Auxiliary Board and members to begin putting thoughts and plans together to improve the Silent Auction, hospitality room setup, and the Auxiliary luncheon.

As detailed in the President's message, the reunion activities will be held over three days, instead of four, which will hopefully encourage more participation by those that might have work conflicts. Please submit all ideas and suggestions to the board. Though the Reno Reunion was a huge success, let's make 2025 even more successful.

We truly appreciate the confidence and support shown to us by the CGCVA and Auxiliary members.

Thank you!

~ Barbara



Auxiliary President Barbara Weeks and husband Russ standing with USCGC Mackinaw's Security Team at the 2023 Coast Guard Festival.

COAST GUARD COMBAT VETERANS ASSOCIATION AUXILIARY MEMBER APPLICATION

Membership Type: Auxiliary _____ New _____ Renewal _____ Returning _____

Two Year Membership from May 20 _____ to May 20 _____

Name: _____ Date: _____ 20 _____ Email Address: _____

Home Phone Number: (____) _____ - _____ Cell: (____) _____ - _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Dues: \$15.00 for a two-year membership. Make check or money order payable to CGCVA.

Mail to: Gary Sherman, CGCVA National Secretary/Treasurer, P.O. Box 969, Lansdale, PA 19449

Auxiliary Membership Qualifications: Family of members of the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association in good standing

Associate Membership Qualifications: All other interested parties. Associated membership is a non-voting membership

For additional information, please contact: Javaughn Miller (Auxiliary National Secretary/Treasurer)

Email: jallsmiller0@gmail.com or (619) 328-8576

FIGHTING COAST GUARD AT IWO JIMA

The crew of *USS LST-792* endured a brush with death while delivering its cargo to the embattled Red Beach 2 near Iwo Jima

By Rod Carlson

Standing on an ugly carbuncle of volcanic rock 500 feet above the Pacific Ocean, the Associated Press photographer swung a cumbersome news camera toward six men holding a pipe with a flag tied to it, and pressed the shutter release. At that instant, all he knew was that combat photography was always a matter of luck and, with hundreds of Marines already dead, it would take more than his share of it to get off Iwo Jima alive.

More surprising than Joe Rosenthal's own survival would be the success of the photograph he had just taken. Eventually, it would appear on stamps, posters, and in magazines and newspapers. Rosenthal's photograph of the flag-raising on Mount Suribachi would sell billions of dollars in war bonds and serve as the basis for the Marine Corps War Memorial overlooking the nation's capital.

Among the Americans who cheered the flag raising as a sign of impending victory was the crew of an LST (landing ship tank) nervously awaiting orders to land on the beach almost at the base of Suribachi. Like Rosenthal, they would need a lot of luck to survive. Luck and the determination was expected from the Coast Guard even though this crew never thought they would end up at a place like Iwo Jima. For a nation of civilians, the iconic image of the flag raising serves as a symbol of the country's unity, sacrifice, and triumph. But for men of *LST-792*, it would be insignificant compared to the images soon to be permanently embedded in their individual memories.

LST: "Large, Slow Target"

For one of the crew, Nick Caiazzo, the war started

in New York City. He had grown up on the streets of East Harlem. He was tough and smart enough to know he couldn't escape the draft. He knew if he waited he would be just another neighborhood kid sent off to fight in World War II. So, being a good swimmer and preferring water to Army mud, he decided to volunteer for the Navy only to be told that they had no use for 16-year-old kids. A few days later, Nick Caiazzo read in the newspaper that one service had openings for his age group and, with the stroke of a pen, he joined the United States Coast Guard. A colorful recruiting poster showing a sleek patrol boat skimming across a sparkling sea was all it took for him to volunteer for sea duty.

But recruiting posters do not provide the whole picture. World War II in the Pacific was an amphibious war, and the U.S. War Department needed crews for ships that could sail great distances and offload entire divisions into battle. Much of the responsibility for manning these new LSTs, which some veterans asserted stood for "large, slow target," fell to the Coast Guard.

Although Pittsburgh might sound like an unlikely place to start an overseas tour, it was where Seaman Caiazzo and his shipmates first went aboard their new LST. Constructed from keel to topmast in about 12 weeks, *LST-792* was over a city block long and 50 feet wide, with a crew of about 115 officers and enlisted men. She could travel at around 12 miles per hour, and with bow doors that swung open, its cargo of 2,100 tons of trucks and tanks could drive onto the beach and straight into combat.

The LST did not look like a typical ship, but more like an overgrown skiff with a house above its stern. Some of the Coast Guardsmen had wanted destroyer duty and grumbled that the LST was nothing more than a floating garage. But the few who had ridden LSTs into battle knew they could count on them in combat conditions.

From the shipyard, *LST-792* sailed down the Ohio to the Mississippi River and then into the Gulf of

COVER STORY

Mexico to practice beach landings, gunnery, navigation, and using the ship's complex equipment, including radar and the powerful davits for raising and lowering their two landing craft. They stopped near New Orleans to take on supplies and continued to Panama, through the Panama Canal. On December 3, 1944, after a final stop in San Diego for replenishment and for farewell phone calls to loved ones, *LST-792* joined a convoy heading west across the Pacific Ocean.



USS LST-792 beached on Iwo Jima.

Standing on the fantail above the churning propellers, Caiazzo watched California grow smaller and finally disappear below the horizon. He wondered when they would come home again. Would they come home again? Every member of the crew knew neighbors, friends, or family members already killed in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific.



Seaman Nick Caiazzo served aboard *LST-792* during the battle for Iwo Jima in February 1945.

Caiazzo wondered if each of the fallen had watched America vanish the way he had. He wondered if they suspected they might be seeing America for the last time.

Caiazzo felt no sadness leaving home and making the transition to military life. There was a new feeling that was not loneliness or any kind of homesickness but more

of a feeling of being separated, of being alone at the end of a diving board. His introspection was cut short when a petty officer barked to Caiazzo and the others who had gathered at the fantail to go back to work. There was always plenty of work and no shortage of enthusiasm. Somewhere in the distance, there was a war and this crew was more than ready to do its part.

A Bad Omen for *LST-792*

After 10 days at sea, *LST-792* entered Pearl Harbor. Now the crewmen were seeing firsthand what they had seen in movie theaters in countless newsreels: Hickam Airfield, Ford Island Naval Air Station, and Battleship Row with the sunken *USS Arizona*, all victims of Japanese treachery four years earlier. But now the scene was different. Any battle damage that had not been repaired was obscured by a continued blur of activity. The shipyards were full of ships being repaired and refitted with updated equipment. The wharfs were thronged with ships being unloaded and filled with cargo destined for innumerable ports scattered around the Pacific. Everything and everyone going to war was going through Pearl. An awesome spectacle of economic and military power, it would have been impossible for the crew of *LST-792*, or any crew, not to be excited to be part of it.

While on still another training operation in Hawaiian waters, *LST-792* had been "volunteered" as a target for Navy fighter pilots who needed strafing practice. In addition to their usual complement of machine guns, each aircraft had been equipped with a camera that would capture each strafing run on film and gauge the pilot's marksmanship.

When one of the pilots squeezed this trigger, thinking he was going to activate the camera, a burst of .50-caliber bullets slammed into the ship's main deck. Metal fragments flew like shrapnel, and sailors were hit. Even though the physical wounds were superficial, for Caiazzo and everyone else the

COVER STORY

incident was troubling. Was this what war was all about—sudden, unpredictable violence with no warning and no means of preventing it or countering its destructive power? They had not even left Hawaii and it was not even an enemy aircraft, and still they were almost killed. What would it be like out there where their enemy would purposely try to kill them? The crew accepted the Navy's apology but seemed to regard the incident more as an omen than an accident.

If the size of a ship is measured by the load it can carry, the stevedores loading *LST-792* thought it was several times larger than anyone else did. On the main deck, they wedged 37 trucks and trailers, and one deck below on the tank deck were 48 bulldozers, cranes, trucks, and trailers plus 342 passengers—soldiers, Marines, sailors, and Navy construction battalion personnel.

One of the stevedores told Caiazzo that *LST-792* was bound for a very bad place. Caiazzo had already learned that the only reliable information was scuttlebutt, so he believed what the dockworker told him and was not surprised when the crew was informed that they were bound for Iwo Jima. Word of their destination was echoed by Tokyo Rose, the Japanese radio personality who beamed propaganda at Americans in the Pacific. She proudly announced that the crew's reception at Iwo Jima would be far worse than the ones dished out at Tarawa, Saipan, or any previous battle. For added credibility, she addressed the ship's captain and several officers by their actual names and ranks.

The strafing incident in Hawaii and Tokyo Rose's personal message to *LST-792* led the crew to consider the possibility that they might be headed for trouble. Officially now in enemy waters, everyone was alert. The crew soon lost track of the number of times the ship went to general quarters.

The Journey to Iwo Jima

The last stop before the war would begin for *LST-792* was the island of Saipan to take on

supplies and conduct a dress rehearsal for the coming invasion of Iwo Jima. Although the fighting on Saipan was over, Japanese soldiers continued to occupy some of the island's innumerable caves. Unwilling to surrender, Japanese soldiers would sometimes launch mass suicide attacks. One of these had taken place the previous night, and the attackers had been slaughtered by Marine machine gunners. Now, the crew of *LST-792* watched a work party using a bulldozer to bury them in a mass grave.

Like everyone else on board, Caiazzo hated the Japanese for their treachery and was glad to see them dead. For a moment he wondered what his mother or his parish priest would say about his own lack of sympathy, but thought better of it. The civilians were in New York and knew nothing about what it took to beat the Japanese. On February 15, 1945, *LST-792* joined a convoy headed some 700 miles due north to the volcanic island of Iwo Jima.



Mount Suribachi, 550 feet high, looms in the background as U.S. Marines assault the beaches of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. The wakes of dozens of landing craft are visible in this image.

Just after 2 a.m., Lieutenant (j.g.) Tom Pennock methodically patrolled the perimeter of the deck. He tugged on tie-downs and pushed against crates to make sure everything was secure. Then he went through the hatch to the darkened wardroom and sat down with a cup of cold coffee. His next conscious act was lifting his head from the dining table enough to see the luminous hands of his watch. It was just past 4 a.m. Pennock walked out onto the deck to

COVER STORY

make sure nothing had gone haywire while he was asleep and found the sea of cargo between the after superstructure where he stood and the forward gun tubs to be unchanged.

The damp breeze felt almost cold as he looked over the side at the ocean swirling past the hull. He could hear the drone of the engines and feel the rhythm of the propellers doggedly screwing through the ocean and driving the ship forward. War or no war, every time Pennock was on the deck at night he knew that if someone came along they would ask what he was so happy about because he knew he was smiling. The reasons were either complex and inexplicable, or as simple as being a natural at everything the job called for.

While others used their bunks for what the U.S. Bureau of Ships had intended, Pennock, a career Coast Guardsman, used his bunk only as a place to sit while tying his shoes after a shower and a change of clothes. Usually, he slept sitting in a chair or on the deck leaning against a crate, and only for a half hour or so at a time. A few hundred yards to starboard, appearing more of a shadow than an object, a destroyer, moving at twice the speed of *LST-792*, raced toward the front of the convoy. Guided only by radar, it made precise circles around the convoy like a loyal sheepdog minding the flock.

After a while, Pennock began to make out soft flashes of light on the horizon, and he knew that the Navy's big guns were bombarding Japanese positions on Iwo Jima. It was February 19, 1945, and the official prediction was that in three days, 10 at the very most, the island would be secure and the Marines would be moving on to the next invasion on the home stretch to total victory. In spite of the official optimism, all who were about to put their lives on the line were justifiably nervous, except Pennock. His philosophy was that whatever was going to happen would happen and he would take things in stride.

An Introduction to Battle

By sunrise, *LST-792* was close enough to Iwo Jima to watch battleships, cruisers, and destroyers firing their guns at an extinct volcano called Mount Suribachi. The Japanese had mined sulfur on Iwo Jima for decades and left countless caves that were ideal defensive positions. The display of firepower was like nothing Pennock had ever seen. Each shell seemed to obliterate an area the size of a city block in an awesome display of fire, clouds of smoke, and plumes of pulverized rock. The noise roused anyone who had not been on duty, and soon spectators lined the deck to watch the show.

As the sun burned off the thin layer of clouds, carrier-based aircraft swarmed overhead and began diving at targets on Suribachi and the rest of the island that spread out in the shape of a teardrop. The planes would start as shiny dots and then grow larger and larger as they dove at their maximum speeds to avoid Japanese antiaircraft fire. Abruptly, they would pull up and get in the queue until it was their turn to attack again. The next plane started its dive and was soon trailing a ribbon of smoke. Then it was engulfed in flames, falling like a comet, and crashing near the base of Mount Suribachi. In quick succession, two more planes were shot down and crashed near the first one.

Pennock was startled by a violent crack near his ship. A Japanese artillery shell had hit so close that water and shell fragments sprayed the hull and the cargo on the main deck. He was sure that someone must have been hit, but everyone was unscathed. Lucky so far, he thought. He turned his binoculars toward a nearby troopship that towered over *LST-792*. Marines in mottled camouflage uniforms and helmets, with rifles and full combat gear, climbed over the side and inched down cargo nets. With each swell, the landing craft rose and fell more than the height of the individual Marines who waited four abreast until the right moment and then stepped off the cargo net onto the deck of the landing craft. As soon as it was tightly packed with Marines, it pulled away and joined others circling near the transports. Then the

COVER STORY

circle became a straight line and the boats ran parallel to the beach before making a 90-degree turn in unison and heading for the beach. It was the first assault wave.

Pennock observed the boats approach the beach and the Marines run up the steep bank of black sand. After a few minutes, there were so many Marines ashore that the bank appeared to have turned from black to green. Under the binoculars, his mouth curved into a smile, and he exhaled in relief. Everything was going to be okay. There was no shooting. The bombers and the Navy's big guns had either made the Japanese evacuate the island or killed its defenders.

Pennock saw a puff of black smoke. There were more puffs, and he then could hear explosions. His entire body flexed, and he pressed the binoculars into his eye sockets. Through the smoke he could see Marines running up the sand bank and then tumbling back toward the water. He knew what was happening. Dead and wounded Marines suddenly lay everywhere. Pennock knew that very soon the LSTs would get the signal to evacuate the Marines. He backed toward the bridge; nothing was happening. Surely orders were on the way. But the landing craft kept going in. He looked back at the bridge. Nothing yet.

Pennock knew the score. The Marines on the beach might be expendable. He might be expendable. But the radar equipment lashed to the main deck, that was a different story. It was irreplaceable. *LST-792* with its precious cargo of radar gear would not be going to rescue Marines or make any landing until the beach was fully secure. And by the looks of things, it would not be anytime soon.

The crew's card games, horseplay, banter, and other antidotes to boredom vanished as soon as *LST-792* arrived at Iwo Jima. With combat now imminent, those standing watch and on duty throughout the ship were vigilant. The troops on



Within hours of the Marine landings on Iwo Jima, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard crewmen of landing craft and LSTs set about the business of unloading supplies and equipment on the black beaches of the island. The loose sand proved difficult for vehicles to negotiate.

board had turned to paper and pen and were writing letters as well as field-stripping, cleaning, and checking the weapons they had ignored since coming aboard.

With dusk, the ship received orders to move offshore for the night. Soon hundreds of ships lying at anchor around Iwo Jima were vanishing into darkness without as much as a cigarette's glow visible across the vast horizon. Behind them the beach was ablaze with dotted strings of machine-gun tracers, bright flashes of mortar and artillery explosions, and the constant twinkling of muzzle flashes. With the ship on full alert and the spectacle of the raging land battle, no one on board got much sleep.

The next morning, as soon as it was light, the battleships resumed shelling Mount Suribachi, and aircraft returned in great numbers. They began dropping their bombs on the flat expanse of the island to the east of Mount Suribachi near the Japanese airfields. The thunder of exploding bombs was continuous. Like green slugs, a few tanks started moving inland. One tank pivoted, lowered its gun,

COVER STORY

and fired a 75mm shell into a bunker. Shielded by tanks against Japanese rifle and machine-gun fire, the Marines inched ahead. They held their weapons like hunters ready for the flush.

At his battle station in a 40mm gun position, Caiazzo knew the Japanese were getting what they deserved but he took no pleasure in death. Then an antitank rocket made a whooshing roar, hit a tank and was enveloped it in a fireball. Ammunition began exploding in the fire. The tanks stopped in place and pivoted in search of the new threat. Then one of the tanks fired into what appeared to be a bunker. In a few minutes the tanks moved forward with the Marine infantry close behind. Caiazzo suspected that if the crew had known they would end up at Iwo Jima, they might have thought twice about joining the Coast Guard.

The Wounded on Iwo Jima

Lieutenant (j.g.) John Waite had not seen the ships shelling Suribachi, the aircraft being shot down, or the Marines fighting on the beach. As the engineering officer, he rarely left the swelter and roar of the engine room. Waite knew he was responsible for the safety of the ship and the life of every man on board. He controlled the engines that determined the ship's direction and speed. Any delay when the bridge called for power could jeopardize the safety of *LST-792*. Although they had been together only a few months, Waite had total confidence in his men. They were the best engine room crew in the entire Coast Guard, for the simple reason that he had never given them an opportunity to be otherwise. While he was giving the port engine a going over, one of his machinist mates slid down the ladder to the engine room and yelled the latest news in his ear. There were so many wounded Marines that the hospital ship could not take them all. Waite registered surprise. It was hard to believe that the invasion had turned into a slugfest after the planners had predicted that the Japanese on Iwo Jima would quickly throw in the towel.

It was now D-day plus three, and the situation on Iwo Jima seemed to remain unclear. It was too serious for routine complaining about the overcrowded ship. Even with the long chow lines and makeshift heads on the fantail, everyone aboard knew that they had it soft compared to the Marines ashore.

Around 10 a.m., Pennock made his rounds and saw that Caiazzo's helmet was tilted forward covering his eyes. He was standing dutifully next to his 40mm gun, but he was asleep. Pennock knew that Caiazzo had spent the previous night in a landing craft ferrying ammunition to the Marines on the beach. Every minute had been a white-knuckle affair. With their landing craft blacked out, it was a miracle they had not hit something. With tons of ammunition aboard, a collision would have been disastrous. Caiazzo would be grateful not only for the shut-eye he was getting; but after the previous night he would be grateful to be alive. Pennock decided to let Caiazzo sleep on. If anyone complained about the sailor sleeping, Pennock would remind them he was responsible for all deck activity.

Hearing explosions, Pennock turned to see mortar rounds exploding near an LST that was offloading equipment on the beach. Then the ship was hit repeatedly and debris flew everywhere. He watched courageous sailors rescuing the wounded and loading them into a landing craft. In a few minutes, the landing craft was alongside *LST-792*, and the coxswain yelled to see if there were medical facilities on board. Pennock shook his head and pointed toward a white ship with a large red cross painted on the side. The coxswain gunned the engine, and the landing craft headed for the open sea and the hospital ship. Pennock could see about 15 wounded aboard; one sailor, completely covered by a blanket, was obviously dead.

Beaching of *LST-792*

Finally, on the morning of D-Day plus four, *LST-792* received orders to beach. Everyone grabbed their

COVER STORY

gear and went to their beaching stations as the ship shuddered under full power and made a sharp turn that ended with her perfectly aimed at Red Beach 2, just to the east of Mount Suribachi. Everyone aboard knew they were in for it, but now that the dice had been rolled there was a collective feeling of relief.

Just a few hundred yards out, any optimism evaporated. Red Beach 2 was being blasted by mortar and artillery fire. *LST-792* reversed course and returned to deep water. A repair ship had its aft cabin shot to pieces and was retreating with clouds of oily black smoke billowing behind it as sailors fought the fire.

Suddenly, everyone was cheering, and all the ships were blowing their horns and sirens. On top of Mount Suribachi an American flag was visible against the pale blue sky. Everyone aboard the LST continued cheering until they heard explosions and saw Marines with a flamethrower shooting fire into a cave just a few hundred feet down the mountain from the flag. A destroyer passing close to the island abruptly slowed and fired its forward guns into another cave. This caused a much louder explosion as a cache of Japanese ammunition exploded. While the flag raising was a welcome diversion, it was obvious that it did not signify victory.



U.S. Marine atop Mt. Suribachi with a view of the beach.

Just before dark, the loudspeaker aboard *LST-792* ordered everyone to their beaching stations, and the ship headed in. The captain personally told Lieutenant Waite to pump out all the ballast tanks. Waite thought he was kidding, but the captain said that the Navy wanted them to beach as high as possible to keep the vehicles from bogging down at water's edge.

Waite responded that beaching without ballast was contrary to procedures and was inviting disaster.

“With no ballast to pump out, we’ll be stuck on the beach until we offload the entire cargo,” he told the captain. “We’ll be a sitting duck for hours.”

The captain, however, told him to follow orders.



Amtracs and other equipment destroyed or crippled by Japanese mortar and shellfire lie abandoned on the beach at Iwo Jima while LSTs are unloaded in the background. Marines climbed Mount Suribachi and planted the U.S. flag on its summit four days after the landings.

Waite was short on military experience but had enough training to know that no one was expected to follow orders that could get people killed or compromise the mission. So, he pumped out all the ballast tanks except the largest one. If he got court martialed, he would simply state that with all the excitement he forgot to pump out one of the tanks.

Chaos of Red Beach 2

With the afternoon sun already low in the sky, *LST-792* was once again aimed at Red Beach 2 and moved in smartly. All the embarking troops belowdecks were in full combat gear, and on the main deck all hands had taken cover in a gun tub or behind a piece of heavy equipment. With its front doors swung open, *LST-792* lurched to a full stop with its nose high on the beach. Inching slowly

COVER STORY

down the ramp, first a bulldozer and then a dump truck drove into the night that was almost as black as the volcanic sand.

A Japanese mortar round hit no more than 30 yards away from *LST-792*. A second was closer. A third struck the main deck and sent shell fragments in every direction. More mortar rounds followed in rapid succession. Then, with an explosion far more powerful than the mortars, an artillery shell ripped through the steel hull and exploded inside of the ship, making the trucks and other cargo on the main deck jump like beans on a snare drum.

Immediately following the artillery explosion, more mortar shells started hitting the main deck. Crates were blown away, and there was blood spattered everywhere. Caiazzo was down, his leg numb and his face so soaked in blood that he could see only enough to know that he was not blind. Using his arms and good leg, he got to his feet. Nearby was a bloodied sailor lying on the deck. Caiazzo lifted him to his feet and helped him aft to the ship's pharmacist mate who was already triaging patients. Caiazzo put the wounded sailor down and turned to go back to his duty station, but the pharmacist mate told him to stay put until he could see how bad the damage was to Caiazzo's face.

LST-792 had to get off the beach fast, and Pennock knew that the captain would not budge without orders, which might never come. Pennock knew that leaving the beach to save the radar equipment would be viewed as brilliant leadership rather than disobedience. Seconds after sending that message to the captain, Pennock felt the engines rev, but the ship just groaned like a trapped animal.

What neither the captain nor Pennock knew was that the instant the ship hit the beach Waite used every available system to empty the large ballast tank he had "forgotten" after the captain ordered him to pump all the tanks dry. The ship was still stuck fast; Pennock signaled the engine room and told Waite to "give me everything you've got, now!"

The noise from the engines rose in pitch, and *LST-792* shook so violently that Pennock thought the welds might bust loose and the steel plates buckle. Then, the ship lurched, made a loud scraping sound, and was moving back 20 yards, 30 yards. Suddenly, there was an explosion so powerful that the bow of the ship seemed to buck like it had been tossed by a wave. A bomb dropped by a Japanese plane hit where *LST-792* had been only seconds earlier.

Pennock zigzagged through the maze of equipment on deck, looking for stricken sailors. He had not gone far when he saw something shiny on the deck. It was gasoline! Then he smelled it; the air was saturated with gas fumes. The mortars had blown holes in the 55-gallon drums lashed to the deck. Pennock freed the 300-pound drums and started throwing them over the side. One of the men in his deck crew joined him, and together, slipping in the gasoline, they jettisoned the drums with astounding speed. Amazingly, there was no fire. Totally soaked in gasoline, Pennock took a breath and knew that he and his ship had been incredibly lucky, far more lucky than any crew could possibly expect to be. A single spark would have turned *LST-792* into a fireball.



At Iwo Jima, U.S. warships lashed Mount Suribachi with high explosive shells in an effort to silence artillery batteries and machine-gun positions firing on the Marines on the beaches below. Here, Japanese soldiers lie dead in one of the countless craters blasted by the American ships.

COVER STORY

Finishing the Job

LST-792 anchored a mile offshore. Through the night, the wounded were cared for, and damage control parties made repairs and confirmed that the ship was seaworthy. The next morning, the ship received orders to beach, and within a few hours the remaining soldiers and equipment were ashore on Red Beach 2.

With the Japanese now pushed back several hundred yards, the beach was transformed into a booming rear-echelon area. LSTs and landing craft were parked gunwale to gunwale with their bows high and dry, disgorging their cargoes of trucks, construction equipment, tanks, and men onto the beach. As soon as one vessel was empty, it would be shooed away by the beach master to make room for another. Like armies of ants, Marines using bucket-brigade lines conveyed stockpiles of ammunition and supplies from LSTs and landing craft to a burgeoning array of storage dumps.

By noon, the members of *LST-792*'s crew who were not cargo handlers had grown restless. The desire to feel solid ground underfoot and the promise of souvenirs were irresistible. In their khaki uniforms, with neither helmets nor other combat gear, Pennock and Waite walked down the ramp, away from the safety of their ship, and over the black-sand ridge that had stopped so many Marines on D-day.

Immediately, they encountered the bunkers and machine-gun nests that had been responsible for killing so many Marines. Now, hanging out of gun ports and windows, the Japanese defenders no longer looked human. They had been turned into inorganic charcoal objects. The corpses that had not been scorched lay in grotesque poses, drying in the sun. Their skin already brown and tight, they looked like ancient mummies in glass-cased museum displays. On Iwo Jima, the stench of rotting flesh and the smoldering rubber from burning equipment numbed the senses and clogged the brain. Waite had to force

himself to keep moving. Here, the Japanese were fighting, not to win or to even die heroically, but to convince America that invading Japan would not be worth the enormous cost in American lives.

Men from *LST-792* stooped over like beachcombers picking through debris for pistols, helmets, swords, and personal items. Wisely, they avoided anything the U.S. Navy's explosive ordnance disposal teams had marked with small flags as possibly being booby-trapped.

More than the sound of a rifle shot, it was the spank of a bullet hitting the sand at their feet warning of a Japanese sniper lurking nearby that sent Pennock and Waite running for their ship. Their sprint for safety was interrupted by Japanese mortars. Finding safety under a wrecked truck, they waited for an eternally long few seconds, until the shells exploded in the sand not 50 yards away. Marines who looked like they had been in combat for months cursed the Coast Guardsmen for drawing fire and interrupting their few minutes of downtime.

Plowing through knee-deep sand, Waite started down the embankment near the beach and nearly stumbled over a dead Marine whose face was half buried in the coarse black sand. This time, Waite could not look away. Waite focused on the Marine's fingers lying limp on the sand. Waite's stomach tightened, and, even though the Marine was in his gaze for a few seconds, he knew that the image would never fade, no matter how long he lived.

Two Battle Stars for *LST-792*

By the middle of the afternoon, *LST-792* had offloaded its cargo and pulled back about a mile offshore where it would lie at anchor awaiting orders to join a convoy. During the afternoon of D-day plus six, perhaps to show that they were still up to the challenge, Japanese artillerymen fired their weapon. Without the gunner's normal need to bracket, make corrections, and then fire subsequent rounds, the first shell hit *LST-792*. The 5-inch shell blew a large hole in the port side a few feet above the waterline.

COVER STORY

Fortunately, the damaged space had been unoccupied.

On D-day plus nine, *LST-792* joined a convoy returning to Saipan where, rumor had it, the ship was to be found beyond repair and would be scrapped. The rumor proved false. With the invasion of Okinawa just over the horizon and LSTs in short supply, the ship was patched up, then headed west.

By the time *LST-792* had completed her tour, she would earn two battle stars and shoot down several Japanese planes although she got official credit for only one. Almost a third of her crew had been wounded. On the final leg of her journey home from the war, the ship needed a tow into the harbor at San Diego, California.

This article appeared in the Warfare History Network, November 2009.



THE NATIONAL VIETNAM WAR MUSEUM

PHASE 2 GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

OCTOBER 21, 2023, AT 11:00 a.m.



The National Vietnam War Museum opened the first phase of its Main Building on June 25, 2022. The approvals of the building and its exhibits from several thousand visitors in its first year have been overwhelmingly positive, so the board of directors has approved the construction of Phase 2, which will add another 20,000 square foot section to the Main Building to house a large number of new exhibits. The Phase 2 Groundbreaking Ceremony will kick off the \$1.5 million fundraising campaign and announce the beginning of the construction project.

Seating and parking space will be limited, so it is necessary for attendees to submit RSVPs. You can send your RSVP by email to info@thenvwm.org or call 682-229-8294. There is no charge to attend the Phase 2 Groundbreaking Ceremony.

For those who would like to help fund Phase 2, four donor levels are available.”

- \$1,000 Contractor Level - Receives front row seat in event tent, a red souvenir shovel, and a sample of dirt from the building site.
- \$500 Architect Level - Receives a seat in the second row, an orange souvenir shovel, and a dirt sample.
- \$250 Engineer Level - Receives a seat in the third row, a yellow souvenir shovel, and a dirt sample.
- \$100 Surveyor Level - Receives a seat in the fourth row, and a white souvenir shovel.

For more information about the ceremony, please email or call using the contact information below. For information about tickets to the Donor Brunch, please email Ean Tillett at Tillett@nationalvnmuseum.org.

If you are unable to attend, but would still like to support Phase 2 or other museum projects, donations may be made through the website, www.nationalvnwarmuseum.org, or by using the information above.

Physical address: The National Vietnam War Museum, 12685 Mineral Wells Hwy,
Weatherford, Texas 76088

Mailing address: P.O. Box 1779, Weatherford, Texas 76086

FEATURED ARTICLES

COAST GUARDMEN KILLED AT IWO JIMA

By CGCVA Vice President Bruce Bruni, Captain,
USCGR (ret)

This past Father's Day weekend, I took my three grandsons to the National Marine Corps Museum at Quantico, VA. It is a very impressive place, with many realistic displays of Marines in combat in the



Nation's various wars since the inception of the Marine Corps in 1775. It also had various Marine aircraft on display from WWI, WWII, and Vietnam, which have been used in combat. The museum is free, but there is a charge to attend a video presentation about Marine recruit training, which is excellent. It takes at least three hours to appreciate the information that is provided throughout the museum's various displays.

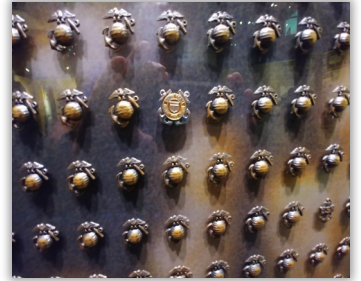
One particular display that caught my attention was the Iwo Jima section. Marines invaded the volcanic island on 19 February 1945, and suffered nearly 7,000 Marine and Navy deaths out of 26,000



Each device representing a Marine, Navy or Coast Guard death at Iwo Jima.

American casualties, before the island was declared secured on 16 March 1945. There is a wall with a Globe and Anchor attached to signify the death of each Marine on the island. In addition, there are more than a few Navy devices for the Navy personnel who were killed. Mixed in with those items was a single Coast Guard device, which piqued my interest so I investigated to see who this person was and how he died. The volunteer at the Museum claimed that the individual was MoMM2 Eugene Atha, of *USS LST-764*. After conferring with the Coast Guard

LANTAREA Historian, Dr. William Thiesen, PhD, I learned that there was another Coastie from the *USS Bayfield* (APA -33) who was killed on D+1 (20 February 1945), S1C Ernesto Leone. I had to inquire, why aren't both represented on the wall?



The invasion of Iwo Jima was one of the largest amphibious assaults of World War II's Pacific campaign. 70,000 Marines invaded the island which was defended by 21,000 Japanese, of whom only 200 or so survived. As stated earlier, Marine deaths and casualties were extremely high in fighting for Iwo Jima, which is located 750 miles from Japan, with the mission of capturing the three airfields on the island. The island was called "Sulfur Island" because of the strong sulfur odor that emanated from the volcanic rock, most prominently from the volcano named Mount Suribachi, the highest peak located at the southwestern tip of the island.

The Japanese were well dug in on the island, with miles of tunnels, caves, machinegun emplacements, and spider holes, to repel the Marine invaders. Some have asked why there weren't more Coast Guardsmen killed during the battle, and it is most likely because the Japanese waited until the Marines were well inland before commencing fire on them, rather than attempting to repel them on the beach. That's when all hell broke loose. The small landing crafts were not targeted, but the larger ships offshore were, once the battle commenced.

It is important to note that those deaths indicated on the wall at the museum occurred in the Marine AOR, which was inland from the high water mark. Those killed below that line of demarcation were in the Navy's AOR and were not included on the wall.

Who were Leone and Atha, where were they from, and how did they die in the defense of the Nation? I wanted answers for these questions, so I

FEATURED ARTICLES

started out in researching the two names through Ancestry.com and the National Archives. I also made contact with Master Chief Dave Mattingly, ISCM, USN, (ret), a docent with the Marine Corps Museum, who has also been seeking additional information about this exact same subject. I owe him a debt of gratitude for pointing me in the right direction and for the information he provided.

MoMM2 Eugene H. Atha



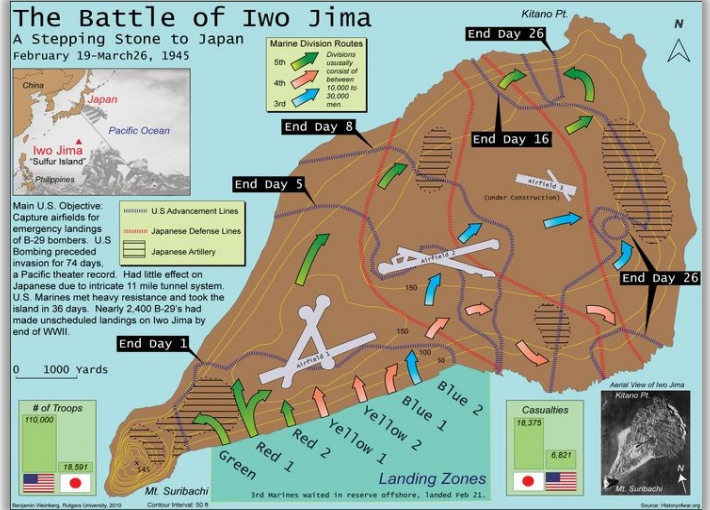
**MoMM2
Eugene H. Atha.**

Motor Machinist Mate Second Class Eugene Hamilton Atha was born 05 May 1923, in West Virginia. He was employed by the Pure Oil Company before his enlistment into the U.S. Coast Guard on 06 December 1942. After recruit training, he was assigned to Swampscott Beach Patrol Barracks, Massachusetts, before receiving orders for Motor Machinist School.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)		
SERIAL NUMBER N 361	1. NAME (Print) EUGENE HAMILTON ATHA	ORDER NUMBER 12510
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) MARMET Kan W.Va.		
3. MAILING ADDRESS Same.		
4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS 19	6. PLACE OF BIRTH WAKEFIELD W.Va.
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr. James Atha Marmet W.Va.		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS LEWIS & KEFFER-MARMET W.Va.		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS MARMET Kan W.Va.		
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 6-1-42) (over) #16-21600-3 Eugene Atha		

Eugene Atha's draft registration card.

Upon graduation, Atha was advanced in rate to MoMM2 and assigned to *USCGC Arundel* (WYT-90), a 110 foot ocean-going tug used for Greenland Patrols and ice breaking duties. In May 1944, Atha was transferred to Landing Ship, Tank (LST) training at Camp Bradford, Virginia. From there he was assigned to *USS LST-764*.



USS LST-764 was commissioned on 13 September 1944, and Atha was a plank owner of the ship, having been on board at the time of the commissioning. *LST-764* transited the Panama Canal to Maui, Hawaii, where it met up with other amphibious ships for training, before sailing for Iwo Jima on 16 February 1945.



***USS LST-764*
on Green Beach
at Iwo Jima.**

Like other landing ships, *USS LST-764* was loaded with personnel, equipment, ammunition, and artillery. From 19 to 24 February, *LST-764* was “Engaged in operations concerning the capture and occupation of Iwo Jima....”¹ By 24 February, all Marine and Navy invasion personnel were disembarked and *LST-764* anchored in the LST anchoring area on 25 February.

According to *USS LST-764's* War Diary, on 01 March 1945, *LST-764* was under Administrative Command of Division 170, Group 85, Flotilla 29 and under Operational Command of Unit 5, Task Group 3, Task Force 53, of the 5th Amphibious Assault Force, 5th Fleet. They were attached to CTG 53.1 for unloading assignments. At

FEATURED ARTICLES

0800hrs on that date, *LST-764* was beached on Green Beach, the crew offloaded cargo of miscellaneous equipment for the Marines, 8th Corps Area Depot, and completed operations at 1615hrs. *LST-764* then transited to the inshore transport area and was moored starboard side alongside *USS Whitesides* (AKA-90), as documented by the *Whitesides's* War Diary, and was tasked with offloading *Whitesides*. There were nightly air raids, as documented by the War Diary, but on 01 March there was only one air alert, and the crews of *LST-764* and *USS Whitesides* went to general quarters. However, no enemy planes were sighted.

According to Certificate of Death from the Commanding Officer of *LST-764*, Ensign Kenneth Kiles and QMC George Frederickson found Atha's body on the tank deck of *LST-764* at 0130hrs, 02 March 1945. According to the report, at the time of his discovery, Atha was cold and stiff, as rigor mortis had already set in. A medical doctor from the *USS Whitesides*, LT. James Lant, U.S. Navy Medical Corps, was called to examine the body at 0210hrs, 02 March 1945. They concluded that Atha had fallen through an open cargo hatch four hours earlier, while going to general quarters for the air alert, and fell a distance of 14.8 feet. They estimated that the time of death was 2140hrs on 01 March 1945, due to cranial injuries, as stated in his death certificate. This should lay to rest the

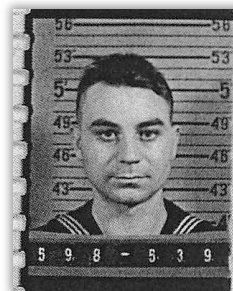
unsubstantiated reports that he died at his battle station from a mortar blast, or on the beach while offloading cargo. His family also received a letter from the Deputy Coast Guard Officer, 9th Naval District, St. Louis, regarding his death, where it states that his death was due to a fall and not to his own misconduct.



Atha's body was initially buried on Iwo Jima with the other casualties, and later returned to West Virginia at the request of his father, and is buried at the Marmet Cemetery, Marmet, West Virginia.

Since Petty Officer Atha did not die within the Marine Corps AOR at Iwo Jima, the Coast Guard Museum does not reflect his death. Also, it is important to note that he is also not listed on the World War II Enlisted Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery for those Coast Guardsmen killed in action during World War II, nor was he awarded a Purple Heart, which is authorized only for those wounded and/or killed from enemy action.

Seaman First Class Ernesto Leone



Seaman First Class Ernesto Leone was born 22 October 1920 in Rogiano Gravina, Italy. He arrived in the United States in 1937 at the age of 17 years, aboard the *SS Rex*, listing his occupation as laborer.

Leone resided at 73 K Street NW, Washington, DC, working as a shoe repairman for Abraham Stein, and registered for the draft in 1941 at 21 years of age. Leone enlisted into the Coast Guard on 02 November 1942. He went to Recruit Training but because of his limited ability to speak English, did not receive an advanced training school. Instead, he was assigned to Coast Guard Barracks, Jersey City, before reporting for duty aboard the *USS Bayfield*

ORIGINAL

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<p>CHECK TYPE REQUIRED (See Instructions attached)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> UPRIGHT MARBLE HEADSTONE</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> FLAT MARBLE MARKER</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FLAT GRANITE MARKER</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> BRONZE MARKER (NOTE RESTRICTIONS)</p> <p>NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) <u>Atha, Eugene Hamilton</u></p> <p>DATE OF BIRTH (Month, Day, Year) <u>May 5, 1923</u></p> <p>DATE OF DEATH (Month, Day, Year) <u>March 1, 1945</u></p> <p>NAME OF CEMETERY <u>Marmet Cemetery</u></p> <p>SHIP TO (I CERTIFY THE APPLICANT FOR THIS STONE HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO TRANSPORT THE STONE FROM THE FREIGHT STATION TO THE CEMETERY) <u>Clayton Smille</u> (Signature of Shipper)</p> <p>FOR VERIFICATION <u>JUL 1 1948</u></p> <p>OFFICER <u>W. CHELMSFORD, MASS. 31 JUL 1948</u></p> <p>NO. <u>3860565</u></p> <p>SHIPPED</p> <p>DDMG FORM 623 REV 15 APR 47</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONE OR MARKER (Please make out and return to duplicate)</p> <p style="text-align: right; color: red;">FLAT GRANITE</p> <p>ENLISTMENT DATE <u>Dec. 2, 1942</u></p> <p>DISCHARGE DATE <u>Killed in line of duty</u></p> <p>SERIAL NO. <u>656932</u></p> <p>PENSION NO.</p> <p>STATE <u>W. VA.</u></p> <p>RANK <u>MOMME</u></p> <p>COMPANY <u>U. S. Coast Guard</u></p> <p>U. S. REGIMENT, STATE ORGANIZATION, AND DIVISION <u>USCG</u></p> <p>LOCATION (City and State) <u>Marmet, West Virginia</u></p> <p>NEAREST FREIGHT STATION (City and State) <u>Marmet, West Virginia</u></p> <p>POST OFFICE ADDRESS OF CONVOYEE <u>Marmet, West Virginia</u></p> <p>I certify this application is submitted for a stone for the unmarked grave of a veteran. I hereby agree to assume all responsibility for the removal of the stone promptly upon arrival at destination, and properly place it at the decedent's grave at my expense.</p> <p>APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE <u>Blanche B. Atha</u></p> <p>ADDRESS (Street, City, State) <u>Marmet, West Virginia</u></p> <p>DATE OF APPLICATION <u>June 24, 1948</u></p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">16-11403-6 GPO</p>
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Eugene H. Atha's burial card and request for headstone or marker. Note that his death was "in the line of duty."

FEATURED ARTICLES

(APA-33), on 22 November 1943.

Leone participated in the successful allied assault on the Cherbourg Peninsula aboard *USS Bayfield* from 15 August 1944 to 09 September 1944, which authorized Leone to wear the American Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the Amphibious Force Insignia. On 31 January 1945, *USS Bayfield* crossed the 180th Meridian at latitude 16° north, heading west, entitling Leone to wear the Asiatic-Pacific campaign bar.



**Amphibious Assault
Force Insignia.**

By 13 February 1945, *USS Bayfield* was anchored off Tinian Island. Two days later, *Bayfield* was headed toward Iwo Jima with Joint Expeditionary Task Force 51. Arriving 15,000 yards off the southeastern coast of Iwo Jima, *USS Bayfield* went to general quarters at 0530hrs. The invasion had begun.



***USS Bayfield* (AP-33) off the coast of Iwo Jima.**

From 19 through 24 February 1945, *USS Bayfield* first engaged in operations to capture and occupy Iwo Jima, then anchored off Iwo Jima and assumed duties as a hospital ship.

S1C Leone was assigned to the small boats and

Wounded Marines arriving for medical treatment aboard *USS Bayfield*.

shore party, taking supplies and personnel to shore and returning with wounded Marines for medical treatment.



On D+1, 20 February 1945, Leone was a member of a shore party on Yellow Beach. At approximately 1300hrs, the shore party came under a heavy mortar attack and they scattered for cover. That was the last time Leone was seen. The attack lasted for about an hour, and when the party mustered together afterward, Leone was missing. Efforts made to determine Leone's fate proved futile. On 20 February 1945, Leone was declared Missing in Action, indicated by the Report of Change in Personnel (NAVCG-2599), completed on 20 February 1945, by *LST-764*'s Executive Officer, J. E. Madacey.

Leone's body had been found and moved to the graves registration area and examined on 25 February 1946. It was determined that the cause of death was shrapnel wounds to the face. This information was entered into U.S. Army form 52b, as well as the location of his grave on Iwo Jima, grave 274, row B at the 4th Marines Cemetery.

Leone was removed from the missing rolls May 1945, with the date of death established as

NAME AND ARMY SERIAL							100	
Leone, Ernest							578-539	
GRADE	COMPANY	REGIMENT AND ARM OR SERVICE						
	No. 107	USCGR.						
DATE OF BIRTH	ARMY	AGE	RACE	NATIVITY	SERVICE YEARS			
DIAGNOSIS: IF INJURY, STATE HOW, WHEN, WHERE INCURRED						DATE	HOUR	
Shrap. Wd face								
LINE OF DUTY								
TREATMENT: A+DD, KIA-DNR (2543)								
ANTIFETANIC SERUM: DOSE				TIME				
MORPHINE: DOSE				TIME				
DISPOSITION: Grave 274 Row 6						DATE	HOUR	
4 May Dep. Iwo Jima						2-25-45		
SIGNATURE, WITH RANK AND ORGANIZATION:								
W. L. Jackson Plm2								
FORM 52b-MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, U. S. A. (Revised October 26, 1940) 16-1544								

**U.S. Army Form 52b
indicating Leone's cause
of death as shrapnel
wounds to the face.**

FEATURED ARTICLES

20 February 1945.

It was declared that S1C Leone's "death was in the line of duty, and not the result of his own misconduct." Memorandum dated 18 May 1945, stated his death was the result of enemy action. It was on 11 July 1946 that S1C Leone was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, which was given to his family.



4th Marines Cemetery on Iwo Jima where S1C Leone was buried in grave 274, row B. Mt. Suribachi is in the background.

INTERMENT IN THE ARRLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY ORIGINAL			
TO: THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.		REGISTRATION NUMBER (Check one) FEB 8 1949	
NAME (Last, first, middle initial) LEONE, Ernesto (White)		STATE A. C.	SERVICE ORGANIZATION (If none or none known, or other organization or branch of service and address, if any) U. S. C. G.
REGISTRATION NUMBER 598539		GRADE S 1/C	U. S. C. G. R
DATE OF BIRTH 13 01 20	DATE OF DEATH 2 20 45	DATE OF INTERMENT Jan 7 1949	DATE OF SERVICE 12 8128
RECEIVED (Signature) Returned with WWII Dead Program from Iwo Jima 4th Marine Div. Gen. Kason Retto		GREEN MOUNTAIN, VT. APR 7 1949 3:53501	
SHIPPING POINT FOR HEADSTONES ROSSLYN, VA.		SIGNATURE OF REPRESENTATIVE OF NATIONAL CEMETERY OR SA OF POINT OF DEPARTURE <i>Joseph J. Walsh, Sr.</i>	
SINC FORM 14 FEB 20 1945 (Previous editions may be used)			

S1C Leone's burial registration card at Arlington National Cemetery.

S1C Leone's remains were returned to the United States several years later, and were interred at Arlington National Cemetery on 07 January 1949, Section 12, grave 8128.



There have been rumors of a Coast Guardsman at Iwo Jima that is reported to have picked up a rifle and headed

inland to fight with the Marines. It is unlikely that it was Leone, based upon the records regarding his death. S1C Leone is the only Coast Guard MIA reported during the battle for Iwo Jima.

After reviewing the documents from the incidents involving MoMM2 Eugene Atha and S1C Ernesto Leone, there is no other conclusion that can be reached in identifying the individual represented on the Iwo Jima wall at the Marine Corps Museum. Leone died as a result of enemy action within the Marine AOR, which is above the high water mark of the beach.

Atha died from an accident in the line of duty and not from an enemy action. Additionally, Atha's death occurred in the Navy's AOR and not in the Marine AOR, making him ineligible for inclusion on the wall, even if he had died as a result of enemy action.

S1C Leone was awarded a Purple Heart, while MoMM2 Atha was not. Leone is listed on the World War Coast Guard Enlisted Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery, while MoMM2 Atha is not. The Enlisted Memorial only lists the Coast Guardsmen that were killed as a result of enemy action.

While both S1C Leone and MoMM2 Atha served their country well during one of America's darkest hours, it is my intent in writing this article for the Quarterdeck Log to clarify who is represented on the Marine Corps Museum's wall. I hope this will satisfy any questions that have surrounded this issue for many years.

Finally, I want to thank Master Chief Dave Mattingly, USN (ret), of the Marine Corps Museum for his willingness to give me access to many of the documents used for this article. I also want to thank Dr. William Thiesen, PhD, for his assistance as well. He pointed me in the right direction for accessing the National Archives. Without their willing assistance, I would have had a very difficult time in my efforts.

FEATURED ARTICLES

THE INVENTION THAT WON WORLD WAR TWO

By David Kirby, *Smithsonian Magazine*



Troops approaching Omaha Beach, June 6, 1944.
~ Photo by Chief Photographer's Mate
Robert F. Sargent, USCG.

Thousands of flat-bottomed boats plowed through rough seas under cold gray skies. The smell of diesel fumes and vomit was overwhelming as the small vessels lurched toward the beaches. Waves slapped hard against the plywood hulls while bullets pinged off the flat steel bows.

Frightened men in uniform hunkered down beneath the gunwales to avoid the continuous enemy fire. Suddenly, they heard the sound of keels grinding against sand and stone. Heavy iron ramps dropped into the surf and men surged forward into



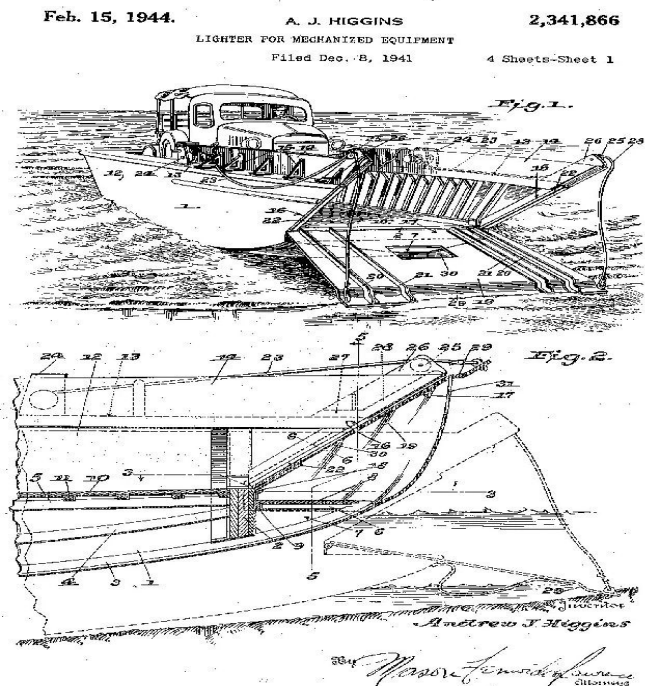
Tightly packed troops crouch inside their LCVP as it plows through a wave. In the distance is the coast of Normandy. ~ Photo courtesy of the WWII Museum.

the cold water toward an uncertain fate.

It was 6:28 a.m. on June 6, 1944, and the first LCVPs—Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel, had just come ashore on Utah Beach at Normandy. D-Day and the Allied invasion of Europe had commenced.

Less than four months earlier, the patent was issued for those very boats. Andrew Jackson Higgins had filed his idea with the U.S. Patent Office on December 8, 1941 – the day after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Now these 36-foot LCVPs – also known as Higgins boats – were being manufactured in the thousands to help American soldiers, marines and seamen attack the enemy through amphibious assaults.

Higgins' creation had a dramatic impact on the outcome of the Normandy landings 75 years ago, as well as many other naval operations in World War II. The vessel's unique design, coupled with the inventor's dogged determination to succeed, may very well have swung the balance of victory to



Andrew Higgins' "Lighter for Mechanized Equipment," patented February 15, 1944 ~ U.S. Patent 2,341,866.

FEATURED ARTICLES

within grasp of the Allies. At least, that's what President Dwight D. Eisenhower believed. "Andrew Higgins is the man who won the war for us," he told author Stephen Ambrose in a 1964 interview.

"His genius was problem-solving," says Joshua Schick, a curator at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, which opened a new D-Day exhibit last month featuring a full-scale recreation of a Higgins boat. "Higgins applied it to everything in his life: politics, dealing with unions, acquiring workers, producing fantastical things or huge amounts of things. That was his essence."

Higgins, a Nebraska native who established himself as a successful lumber businessman in New Orleans, began building boats in the 1930s. He concentrated on flat-bottomed vessels to meet the needs of his customers, who plied the shallow waters in and around the Mississippi River delta. He constantly tinkered with the concept as he sought to improve his boats to better match the ideal in his own mind of what these boats should be.

During the Prohibition era, Higgins had a contract with the U.S. Coast Guard to build fast boats for chasing after rum runners. There are rumors that he then went to the rum runners and offered to sell them even faster boats. Schick doesn't come right out and confirm the stories, but he doesn't deny them either.

"That stuff is always fun to smile and chuckle about, but no one ever keeps a record saying that's what they did," he diplomatically states.

Higgins' innovative spirit enabled a series of breakthroughs that led to the eventual design that became his namesake boat. First was the spoonbill bow that curled up near the ramp, forcing water underneath and enabling the craft to push up on to the shore and then back away after offloading. A ridge was later added to the keel, which improved stability. Then, a V-shaped keel was created and that allowed the boat to ride higher in the water.

"There was no task Higgins couldn't do," Schick

says. "He would find a way to do something, then find a way to do it better."



**Andrew Higgins was named on 18 patents. ~
Photo National Inventors Hall of Fame.**

Higgins started making landing craft for the Navy when World War II began. He built a 30-footer, the Landing Craft Personnel (LCP), based on government specifications but he insisted a larger boat would perform better. The Navy relented and he came up with a 36-foot version, the Landing Craft Personnel Large (LCPL), that would become the standard for the rest of the war.

The Marines weren't completely satisfied with this boat, though. The design required personnel and equipment to be offloaded by going over the side. In 1942, the Marines requested a ramp be added to the front of the vessel for faster egress.

"Higgins takes the LCPL, cuts the bow off, puts a ramp on it and then it becomes the LCVP, which becomes the famous Higgins Boat," Schick says.

That landing craft, often referred to as "the boat that won World War II," could quickly carry up to 36 men from transport ships to the beaches. It also could haul a Willys Jeep, small truck or other equipment with fewer troops. Higgins' earlier modifications, along with an ingenious protected propeller system built into the hull, enabled the boats to maneuver in only 10 inches of water.

This version became the basis for a variety of designs and different configurations during World War II. LCA (Landing Craft Assault), LCM (Landing Craft Mechanized), LCU (Landing Craft Utility), LCT (Landing Craft Tank) and other models followed the same fundamental style, all built by Higgins or under license with his company, Higgins

FEATURED ARTICLES

Industries. Higgins was named on 18 patents, most of which were for his boats or different design adaptations to the vessels.

At the height of World War II, Higgins Industries was the largest employer in the New Orleans area. More than 20,000 whites, blacks, women, elderly and handicapped people worked at seven plants in one of the first modern integrated workplaces in America. They produced a variety of landing craft in different shapes and sizes, PT boats, supply vessels and other specialized boats for the war effort.

Higgins developed a reputation for being able to do the impossible. Once, the Navy asked him if he could come up with plans for a new boat design in three days. “Hell,” he replied. “I can build the boat in three days.” And that is exactly what he did.

“The man was all about efficiency and getting things done,” Schick says. “The Navy began to realize that if there was an impossible task, just give it to Higgins and he’ll do it.”

The secret to Higgins’ success may have been his personality. He was driven to succeed and never let barriers slow him down. He often bulldozed his way through or over bureaucratic quagmires, labor difficulties, material shortages and negative-thinking people with a brusque attitude and a few salty words.

“As long as Higgins was the one in charge and didn’t have to rely on other people, he could bust through any obstacle that came in his way,” Schick says. “That attitude of determination and hard work helped him solve just about any issue.”

The Higgins Boats saw action in many amphibious landings throughout World War II. In addition to Normandy, they were used in Sicily, Anzio, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Saipan, Okinawa, Peleliu and countless other beaches in the European and Pacific theaters of operation.

More than 20,000 of the Higgins-designed landing craft were made from 1942 to 1945, but



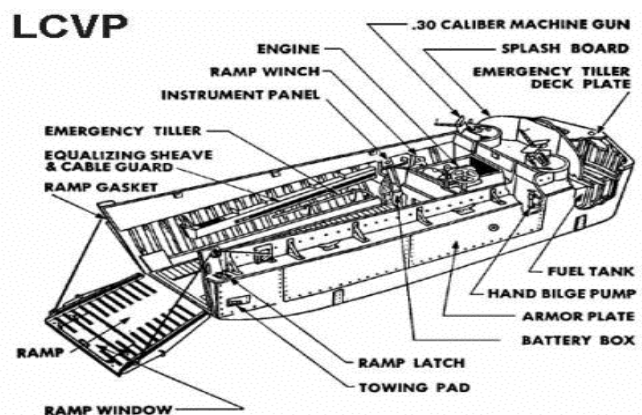
The National World War II Museum in New Orleans is displaying this full-scale recreation of a Higgins boat.

Photo ~ The National WWII Museum.

fewer than 20 remain today. To commemorate D-Day, one of the surviving Higgins boats is on display through July 27, in the gardens outside of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office headquarters and National Inventors Hall of Fame Museum in Alexandria, Virginia.

Their legacy cannot be understated. They changed the course of the war and provided the Allies with an ability to strike anywhere with speed and effectiveness – all because of the incredible pluck of the inventor, who was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame this year.

“Higgins was a man ahead of his time,” Schick says. “He had attitude and determination. He knew how to lead and organize. He surrounded himself with smart people and knew how to get the most out of them. He was a strong-minded man.”



ASSOCIATION NEWS

D-DAY REENACTMENT IN CONNEAUT, OHIO

Each year, the nation's largest WWII reenactment is held at Conneaut in Northeast Ohio with upwards of 40,000 visitors over the three-day event. This year it was held August 17-19, with about 1,500 reenactors in the WWII uniforms of the Allied and Axis forces. There were World War II armor and aircraft, and paratroopers dropping into the landing zones while providing a "living history" for the public. There were also the famous Higgins boats, the landing craft that were key in getting Allied forces to the beaches of Normandy, but this time providing rides to spectators on Lake Erie. The PA28-16 boat was used in the making of "Saving Private Ryan" and is stored in Conneaut. A USO dance was held with several hundred in attendance that included the public and reenactment personnel in Allied and Axis WWII uniforms.

Dave Hennessey, a CGCVA member and Desert Storm veteran with PSU-301 of Buffalo, provided

the photos of the event. Wearing the attire of a WWII Coastie, Hennessey manned a machinegun aboard a landing craft and wore the cracker jack dress blues with the blue flat hat to the USO dance. He represented the Coast Guard, informing visitors that the D-Day landings were not just a Navy/Army operation, but that the Coast Guard played a significant role in the D-Day invasion landings as well.

The local D-Day Museum, which is supported by the D-Day reenactment event, is located in Conneaut at the Old Hungarian Church, 851 Harbor Street. It features various WWII area artifacts from the Allied and Axis forces and Homefront relics. See their Facebook page at: <https://facebook/DDayMuseum/>.

Maybe next year more CGCVA members will visit the reenactment and proudly wear their CGCVA ball caps, so that the public knows that the Coast Guard serves in combat zones and is a vital military force.



Upper Left:
Hennessey in a
WWII Coastie work
uniform
Lower Left:
Hennessey with
Bevin Lynn at the
USO dance

TRIVIA

Down through the years, in the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and the World War, high standards of duty and a seaman's job well done have crowned the efforts of the Coast Guard.

PNP Terry O'Connell has provided a comment that he has found in "Naval Customs, Traditions and Usage" published by the USNI in 1936.

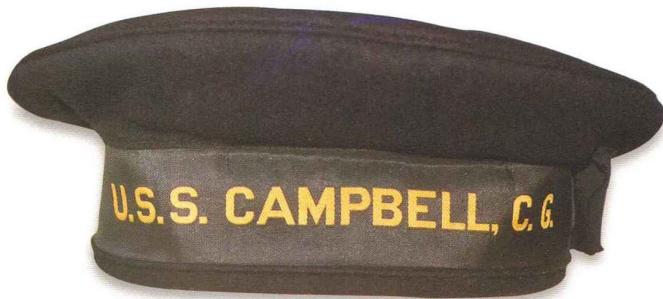


**RADM F.C.
Billard, USCG.**

The late Rear Admiral Frederick C. Billard, (1873-1932) U. S. Coast Guard wrote: "Having fought as a part of the Navy in all our wars and taking an especial pride in being fully prepared to perform creditable service in the Navy whenever called upon, the officers and men of the Coast Guard are inspired not only by the high tradition and fine history of their own service, but also by the splendid traditions, history and indoctrination of the United States Navy. They have thus two rich heritages to be proud of and two standards of the same lofty character to live up to."

The Flat Hat

When we were issued all of our gear in boot camp, we were given three kinds of hats. The white



The above is a rare picture of a flat hat with the name of a Coast Guard ship that was under navy command early in WWII.

Dixie Cup hat (2), an all-round article of dress for work and liberty; the watch cap (2), which was a knit wool stretch cap designed for cold weather; and the

flat hat (1), a blue wool hat with a ribbon on it that was only to be used for cold weather liberty. The ribbon had either U.S. Navy or U.S. Coast Guard emblazoned on it in gold print. Up to the early months of WWII the ribbon usually had the name of your unit printed on it.

On the east coast, we wore the flat hat from about October to April. I also wore it in Japan during the winter months. A lot of guys did not like this hat, but I always did. If you put a wire cut from a coat hanger inside the rim you could bend the front and back up to get a very salty appearance. Of course, the powers that be did not like this because, after all, it is supposed to be a "flat hat" but we did it anyway.

Most of the time in the winter the only way we could differentiate a Navy guy from a Coastie was by the ribbon on the flat hat. Our distinctive white shield on the right sleeve of the jumper was covered by wearing a pea coat. These hats went out in the early sixties when the Coast Guard went to the so called "Donald Duck" hat, which was a white dress hat with U.S. Coast Guard emblazoned across the front. I still have my original issued "flat Hat," a memento of a time long ago. ~ Robert Dell



Andy Griffith portraying a WWII Coastie in the movie "Onionhead" wearing the flat hat.

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION NEWS

CONSIDER (OR RECONSIDER) SBP COVERAGE

~ From Legion Magazine August 2023

It's been about 18 years since the last Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) open season. Retirees and other eligible members not enrolled in SBP or Reserve Component SBP may sign up until January 1, 2024, and those enrolled may permanently discontinue their SBP coverage. Enrollees will be responsible for paying the premiums they would have paid if they had signed up when first eligible, plus interest.

While every situation is unique, here are five red flags that should have you heading to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service SBP open season landing page (www.dfas.mil) or Coast Guard Pay and Personnel (www.dcms.uscg.mil/ppc/ras/sbp) site to learn more.

You lack critical protection. Many discussions of SBP try to compare the program to life insurance products. In reality, it's part of your overall financial plan. If you review the situation and determine that losing your entire monthly military retirement check would cause financial hardship, it makes sense to request the numbers. What would it cost to enroll?

You have health challenges. A terminal illness or scenario in which your life expectancy is significantly affected might make a seemingly big cost to enroll financially feasible. Let's say your military retirement is \$5,000 per month and you retired 10 years ago. I'd estimate it might cost you around \$40,000 to enroll. That's a big number. But if you were to die next year, your spouse would recoup that cost in SBP benefits in little more than about a year.

You missed a window. This generally happens if you left the service without any beneficiaries. If you get married or have children, you have a year after the life event to sign up for SBP. If you missed that, this open season is an opportunity to sign up.

You didn't keep your end of the bargain. Perhaps when you retired, you anticipated that a new employment income combined with your military retirement check would turbo-charge your savings and investments, making SBP's protection irrelevant. Instead, life happened, and it took you longer than expected to land in the right spot (eating up financial reserves) or relocation and cost of living were more of a drain than you would have guessed. Maybe your investment moves were characterized by bad timing or never got momentum. Don't be afraid to revisit your SBP decision.

Lifelong inflation-adjusted protection seems more relevant. Priorities and perspectives change. I've often touted the stability and simplicity SBP offers for the beneficiary. It could be those characteristics sound a whole lot better as you've matured.

If one of these descriptions fits, there is time left to evaluate the open season opportunity and make a decision that works for you and your family.

Author J.J. Montaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. www.legion.org/usaa.

Star Date 2255 ~ The Future



VETERANS ADMINISTRATION NEWS

ACCESSING VA DECISION LETTERS ONLINE

Did you know that Veterans can now electronically access their VA decision letters online?

- Access your decision letter when you need it
- Avoid the wait required to receive paper letters
- Eliminate the need to store paper copies or request reprints from the VA
- The Decision Letter Tool allows Veterans to download their decision letters using VA.gov

Any Veteran with a VA.gov login can use this tool, which provides instant access to decision letters. Veterans no longer have to speak with the VA or wait for a paper letter in the mail to know the decisions made on their claim.

Check out the Youtube video for information on how to use the Decision Letter Download Tool at: <https://youtu.be/Y9TKxj3P-A4>



Protecting Veteran Privacy Website Improves Veteran Experience
By VA Office of Information and Technology.

PROTECTING VETERANS PRIVACY

August 9, 2023 ~ Need to file a privacy complaint related to your VA benefits? Would you like tips on how to prevent identity theft? Are you a Veteran who wants to amend your VA record? Or do you have a question about VA's privacy policies as they relate to Veteran data and records?

VA Privacy Service's new "Protecting Veteran Privacy" website at <https://department.va.gov/privacy> has all the answers for Veterans, their beneficiaries, Privacy Officers and VA employees.

The recently launched website offers an improved user experience, one that significantly simplifies finding VA privacy information. The site features a

completely new design, simpler navigation and fully revised content. Veterans will find it easier than ever to:

- Report a privacy complaint
- Report suspected identity theft
- Find a System of Records Notice
- Get VA benefits fraud prevention tips
- View VA policies on privacy
- Access and download information sheets on protecting your identity and privacy
- Keep updated on VA's SSN reduction activities
- Learn from frequently asked privacy-related questions

VA's old external Privacy Service website is now in decommission status. Users going to the old site will be automatically re-directed to the new site. We encourage you to bookmark the new website: <https://department.va.gov/privacy>.

THE PACT ACT AND YOUR VA BENEFITS

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

The PACT Act adds to the list of health conditions that we assume (or "presume") are caused by exposure to these substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve. See: <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/#information-for-survivors>.

This page will help answer your questions about what the PACT Act means for you or your loved ones. You can also call us at [800-698-2411](tel:800-698-2411) (TTY: [711](tel:711)). And you can file a claim for PACT Act-related disability compensation or apply for VA health care now.

MAIL ORDERS TO

Russell Allyson
193 Durham Point Road
Durham, NH 03824

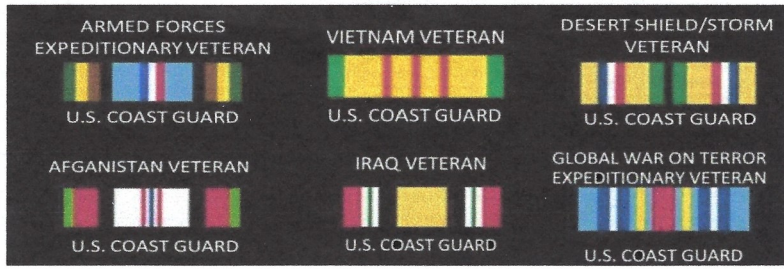
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russallyson@gmail.com

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www.coastguardcombatvets.org

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or

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Large ideal for jacket or vest **\$7.50**



NEW AND IMPROVED POLO SHIRTS

It is a tough, high-performance polo that defies snags, resists wrinkles, fights odors and wicks moisture. Navy blue in color, the polo shirt has the new CGCVA logo positioned over the left breast area.

Sizes S, M, L, XL - **\$44.00** XXL - **\$47.00**
PLUS \$5.00 FOR SHIPPING

CGCVA GARRISON CAP: Fore'n'aft cap with small CGCVA color logo ready for CGCVA logo attachment. Must specify cap size.

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BOOK - USCG ACTION IN VIETNAM: By Paul Scotti, PNP, LM. A great history of the U.S. Coast Guard's participation in the Vietnam War. **\$24.50 + \$5.00 FOR SHIPPING**

CGCVA OVAL STICKER: Vinyl, will stick to your car, boat, motorhome or just about anything. **4" oval \$1.00, 8" oval \$2.00**

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USCG VIETNAM PATCHES: RONONE, RONTNREE, Operation Market Time, Gulf of Tonkin Yacht Club - **\$6.50**

COAST GUARD COMBAT VETERANS ASSOCIATION



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Please Print Legibly)

PERSONAL INFORMATION



Last Name		First Name		MI	Suffix	DOB
Street Address			City	State	Zip	
Telephone:	Cell	Home	Other	Email		

For those with a second address, please submit that address to cgcva@comcast.net. When switching between the primary and secondary addresses make sure that you notify the CGCVA of the address change so that you will continue to receive the Quarterdeck Log. To notify the CGCVA of a permanent address change, send an email with the new address to cgcva@comcast.net.

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Service Branch and Dates of Service	Grade, Rank, Rate at Time of Discharge of Retirement
(Indicate broken service or other service affiliation below: (continue on reverse if necessary))	
Service Branch and Dates of Service	Grade, Rank, Rate at Time of Discharge of Retirement

Qualifying Service Medal Awarded (See Ribbons above)	Dates in Theatre of Operations and Name of Campaign / Operation	Ship(s) or Unit(s) Assigned at Time of Deployment

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

This application MUST be accompanied by a copy of one or more of the following documents indicating applicant's participation in, or in direct support of, combat contingency operations: DD-214 (all pages), DD-215, NAV/CG-523, Letter(s) of awards or other "official" documentation stating participation WHILE A MEMBER OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD. If necessary, a certified statement from a former shipmate who is a member of CGCVA and in "good standing" stating that they served with applicant in a specific unit during a deployment location and timeframe that qualifies for membership

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 P.O. Box 969
 Lansdale, PA 19446
Make checks payable to: CGCVA
 Questions: 410-690-8000

Print Name of CGCVA Sponsor or Referral

Signature of Applicant

Date

Check appropriate box: Regular Membership Associate Membership Other

**Please! Look at the Exp. Date on your label
and renew if due. The Quarterdeck Log**

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**View of USCGC Spencer taken from sister ship USCGC Duane, north Atlantic,
500 nautical miles WSW of Ireland, April 1943. (U.S. Coast Guard Photo)**